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this issue:
final chapter
Vaughn Bodé's
COBALT 60
by Mark Bodé
& Larry Todd

also:
THE LAST GALACTUS STORY
by John Byrne
& Terry Austin

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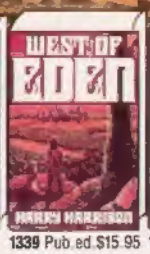

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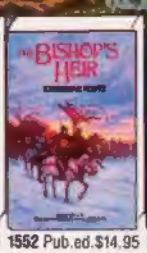

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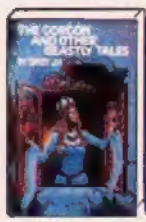

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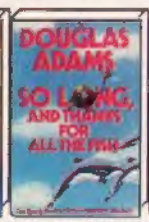

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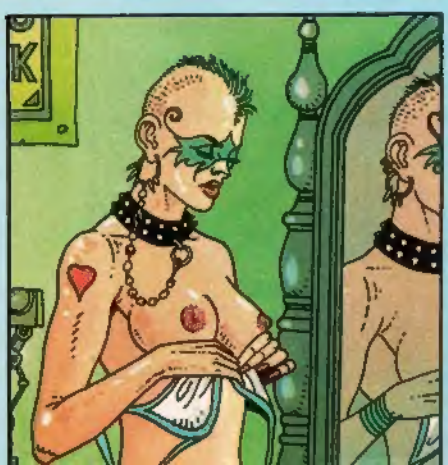

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AUGUST 1985 VOL. 1, No. 31

CONTENTS

The Seed and the Sower/Page 9
espionage, robotics, and growing pains
story by Jon J Muth/art by Jon J Muth & Kent Williams

Cobalt 60: Part VII/Page 14
we have met the enemy and he ain't us, but the face is familiar
story by Larry Todd/art by Mark Bode

Mediaview/Page 32
the great loser comes up with another winner
review by Dennis O'Neil

Futureview/Page 34
the race may be to the swift, but cheap and massively promoted don't hurt
review by John Robert Tebbel & Martha Thomases

Beyond Legend/Page 35
the world is a stage and we all play a part; not everyone loves their role
story by Archie Goodwin/art by Victor de la Fuente

The Sword of Sh'rlii/Page 43
coming right to the point about elfin weaponry
story & art by Paty Cockrum

Wah, Wah, Wah/Page 49
the Phillip Marlowe of the future on the trail of a maniac
story & art by Zoran Vanjaka

Bookview/Page 59
faith, forgiveness and a fantasy anthology
review by Jo Duffy

Year 20/Page 67
it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas, even on one of Jupiter's moons
story & art by Marc Hempel

Toadswart: Part V/Page 75
cat and mouse, Golem style
story & art by Tim Conrad

Time of the Dragon/Page 87
a special look at a new limited series
art by John Bolton

The Last Galactus Story/Page 91
oh, what a tangled web we weave, and check out the scale of that loom
story & pencils by John Byrne/inks by Terry Austin/colors by Glynis Oliver

Feedback/Page 86
reader reaction to our twenty-ninth issue

Cover/John Bolton
artwork © 1985 John Bolton

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OVERVIEW
notes on stories & contributors

An interesting aspect to producing a magazine like ***Epic****—and other comics projects as well—is how little you actually work in person with the contributors. Most work freelance and live anywhere from New Jersey to Japan. Sure, a number of people in comics are in the New York area and drop in once a week or so, but more often than not the majority we work with do so by mail, courier service, and telephone.*

Therefore, it was especially pleasant to have this month's cover artist, ***John Bolton,*** *pop in for a visit. Being a resident of London, John definitely doesn't fall into the "drops in once a week or so" category. This was the first time in a year that John, accompanied by his wife* ***Liliana,*** *has come by our offices. Coincidentally, this also marks a year since John has had artwork appear in* ***Epic Illustrated.*** *He hasn't been at all idle, fortunately, and a great deal of what he's been up to is accounted for in the article beginning on page 87 of this issue about* ***The Black Dragon*** *Limited Series that he and writer* ***Chris Claremont*** *are doing for our* ***Epic Comics*** *line. As he closes in on the last book in that series, what are John's future plans? Well, we spent a great deal of his visit trying to make certain that it wouldn't be another year before the artist of such popular features as* ***Marada the She-Wolf*** *and* ***The Ogre and the Mayor's Daughter*** *graces us with more of his work while John and Chris pitched a proposal for a fantasy in graphic novel format that they'd like to begin after* ***Black Dragon*** *runs its course. We don't know which will wind up getting done first, but as long as it means future in-person visits from the Boltons, we'll be happy.*

THE SEED AND THE SOWER

Two of our favorites among the field's newer talent make a team effort on this story, namely ***Jon J Muth*** *and* ***Kent Williams.*** *Mr. Muth wrote the short and poignant piece and he and Mr. Williams collaborated on the artwork. Traditionally in comic book circles art collaborations generally involve one artist doing the story in pencil form and the other doing the rendering—whether in ink or by painting. Kent and Jay went at this a bit more organically with each of them doing some penciling and some rendering in almost every panel. The end product is remarkably seamless, though it's fun to glance through the story and try to decide who contributed what in which particular picture. It was Jay's influence that led them to do the job in water color, a medium at which Jay has become pretty much of an expert (you owe it to yourself to find the comics specialty shop nearest you and check out his regular Epic series,* ***Moonshadow,*** *just to see how expert). Kent hadn't worked in water color since art school but so enjoyed the experience that he used it for his very next solo job,* ***The Sign,*** *which we—masters of perversity—ran last issue.*

COBALT 60

It's always a little sad for us when we reach the end of a long running serial, like the departure of a friend whom we've grown very used to having with us and come to depend upon. Particularly in the case of ***Cobalt 60.*** *We've always had a special regard for the short story which introduced the character back in the sixties, the creation of* ***Vaughn Bodé.*** *Vaughn invented numerous characters and strips, many of which, such as* ***Cheech Wizard,*** *overshadowed Cobalt. Vaughn's death cut short any chance of him going back and developing his violent and touching mutant warrior though he did have plans and notes for doing so. It's been*

exciting to see his son, **Mark,** and his friend, **Larry Todd,** finally bring those intentions to fruition and bring the character into his own. Equally as exciting has been watching the pair of them make their own feelings, talents, and insights felt on **Cobalt 60,** rendering the feature vibrant and viable, not just an empty homage.

Leavening our thoughts about ending the strip is the knowledge that this isn't really the end of Cobalt's story. Actually it's more like a halfway point. A phase has ended—surprisingly, we hope—but a new and different part of Cobalt 60's life is about to begin. Mark and Larry already have it planned out and are pausing a while to catch their breath before plunging ahead again. So, Cobalt will be back. We'll keep you posted as to exactly when.

BEYOND LEGEND

Ask almost anyone in any phase of the entertainment business and they'll tell you the western is dead. Still, there are those of us who are very fond of the genre and who are never quite willing to admit that—unless you're **Louis L'Amour**—you're not going to get a lot of folks to go for a western. And in that never say die spirit, we came up with this fantasy adventure that is actually a western, or maybe we came up with this western that is actually a fantasy adventure. We get a bit confused about the exact label.

What we didn't get confused about is the artist to have draw it. **Victor de la Fuente** is one of Europe's premier cartoonist-illustrators. And two of the genres in which his graphic story albums have been most successful are fantasy, **Haxtur,** and western, **Amargo.** With his fluid brush style and casual mastery of drawing, Victor perfectly brings together both the romanticism of fantasy and the rugged violence of the western.

THE SWORD OF SH'RLII

For pure fantasy, it's hard to beat elves and magic swords and in this first piece for **Epic Illustrated, Paty Cockrum** has given us both. Paty's a Marvel fan who went on to become a staff artist with the company. After being a mainstay in our special projects department, she elected last year to branch out on her own. Though she's since done art on **Spiderman** as well as the coloring on **The Futurians** graphic novel (written and illustrated by her husband, **Dave,** and soon to become its own on-going comics series), this was one of the first stories she did after leaving the staff, allowing her to demonstrate her imaginative way with full-color rendering not normally possible in regular comics. The characters in **The Sword of Sh'rlii** have been a pet project of Paty's for some time. Though the story is complete in and of itself, it isn't their only adventure and it's far from being their last.

YEAR 20

Back in our twentieth issue, we ran a science-fiction piece with a rather nasty edge to it called **Arise, Awake.** It was **Marc Hempel's** second story for us. Since then, he and his partner in Baltimore's **Insight Studio, Mark Wheatley,** collaborated on the critically acclaimed alternative comic, **Mars.** In **Arise, Awake,** Marc gave us a story that would seemed to have ended with no room for future considerations. Now, almost two years later, Marc returns with a continuation to the first piece. It stands on its own, you need not have read the first story to understand this one, though readers of the first will find deeper resonances in this tale which is perhaps less a sequel than an epilogue.

—**Archie Goodwin**

NEXT ISSUE

THE CEREBUS PORTFOLIO
by
DAVE SIM
and
GERHARD

also
THE LAST GALACTUS STORY
by
JOHN BYRNE
and
TERRY AUSTIN

plus
from award-winning
science-fiction author
EDWARD BRYANT
PREDATORS

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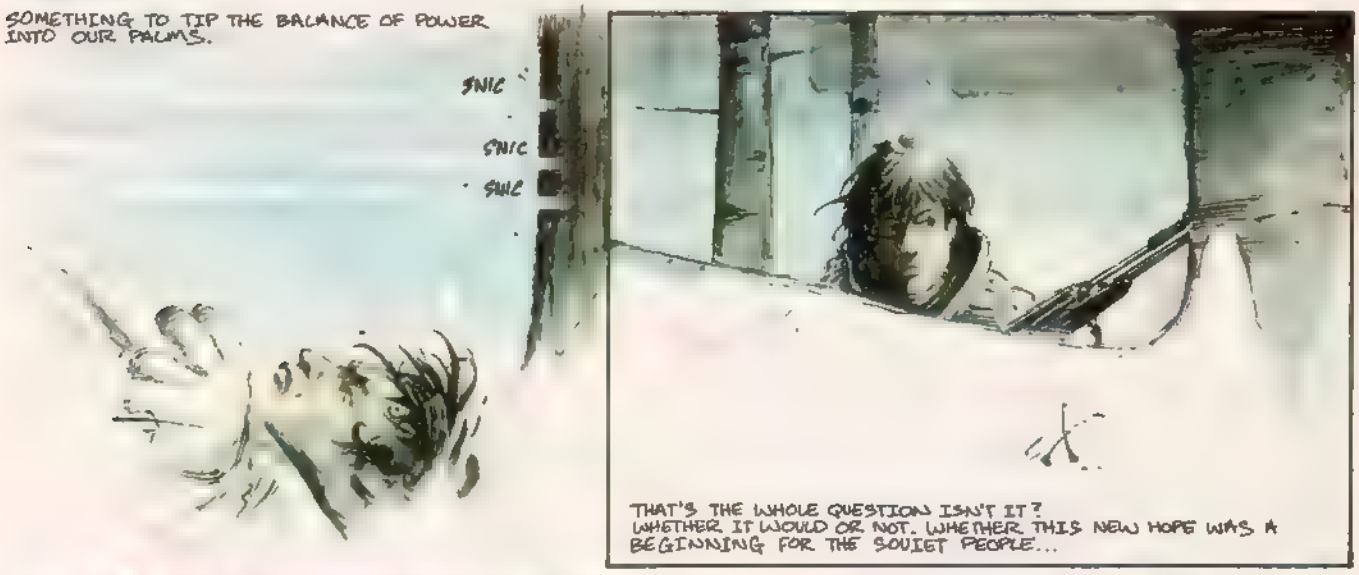
PROLOGUE

SHOOTING HER WASN'T EASY. NOT SOMETHING I WANTED.
I WISH I COULD TELL YOU THAT WE HAD SOME WONDERFUL TIMES TOGETHER. TIMES WHEN SHE AND I WOULD GO FOR WALKS IN THE PARK. AND MAYBE I COULD SAY SHE WOULD PUSH ME ON THE SWINGS. BUT SHE WAS ALMOST TWENTY-NINE BEFORE I EVEN GOT TO KNOW HER. THERE NEVER SEEMED TIME FOR PARKS OR SWINGS...
OR SATURDAYS AT THE PICTURE SHOW OR YELLING FOR ME TO CLEAN UP MY ROOM OR CHANGE MY SOCKS...
OR ALMOST ANYTHING ELSE MOTHER'S TELL THEIR SONS.

story © 1985 Jon J Muth/artwork © 1985 Jon J Muth and Kent Williams

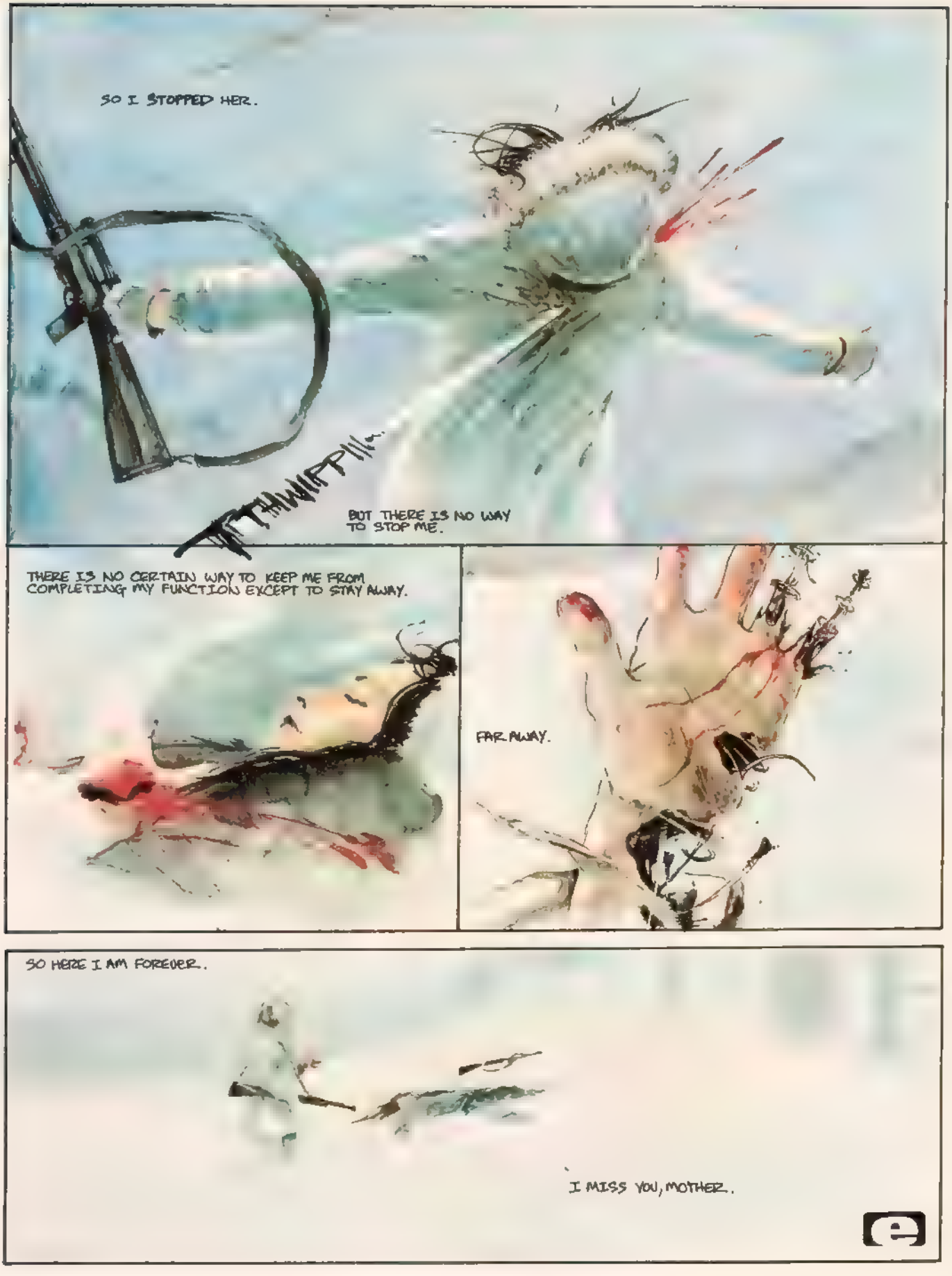
the SEED and the SOWER
DIFFERENT.
I AM THE SON OF A PIONEER.
IN 1950, A TWENTY-TWO YEAR OLD GENIUS, ANA HEVEST, MOVED QUICKLY FROM AMERICA, WHERE HER POLITICS WERE SEEN AS 'DANGEROUS AND SUBVERSIVE', BACK TO HER NATIVE YUGOSLAVIA, TO BEGIN WORK ON A PROJECT THE KREMLIN HAD CALLED THE SEED.

"A NEW HOPE FOR THE GREAT SOVIET PEOPLES" VASILIKOV HAD TOLD HER.
KRAK


SOMETHING TO TIP THE BALANCE OF POWER INTO OUR PALMS.
SNIC
SNIC
SNIC
THAT'S THE WHOLE QUESTION ISN'T IT? WHETHER IT WOULD OR NOT. WHETHER THIS NEW HOPE WAS A BEGINNING FOR THE SOVIET PEOPLE...

OR AN END
FOR ALL

THE FINEST BIOMECHANICAL ENGINEER EVER.
KLAT
THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD DO IT.
BUT I COULDN'T LET HER, AND I COULDN'T ALLOW HER TO LEAVE TO TRY AGAIN SOMEWHERE ELSE.
IT WAS TOO MUCH POWER TO GIVE ONE GROUP OF PEOPLE.


SO I STOPPED HER.
THWIP!!!
BUT THERE IS NO WAY TO STOP ME.
THERE IS NO CERTAIN WAY TO KEEP ME FROM COMPLETING MY FUNCTION EXCEPT TO STAY AWAY.
FAR AWAY.
SO HERE I AM FOREVER.
I MISS YOU, MOTHER.

COBALT-60

BASED ON CHARACTERS BY VAUGHN BODĒ

ARTWORK BY MARK BODĒ

STORY BY LARRY TODD

©MARK & BARBARA BODĒ 1984

SYNOPSIS

FE 56, king of the Radio People, is dead. So is his queen, AU 80. To all appearances, they were killed by one of the ravaging bands of mutants who live in the wastelands beyond Radio City. Since their deaths, the new rulers, Strontium 90 and his prime minister, Polonium 210, have conducted a reign of terror against the increasingly violent and antagonistic mutants. The Holy Molders, priests of human genetics, seek out and purge any who show signs of even marginal mutation. Mutants themselves are slaughtered by the military, and sterilization edicts are issued. But, in one vital matter, Strontium is prepared to risk the goodwill of his strongest supporters. BBC, heiress to the Radio throne, is approaching maturity, and despite the disapproval of the priests and his advisers, Strontium intends to wed her.

However, unknown to any of them, a far better claimant to the throne still exists. Cobalt 60, the son of FE 56 and AU 80, was sent away to safety while he was still a child, and raised by a marginal mutant. Now, grown to manhood, he keeps his features hidden by a hood of white cloth and strikes for the mutants, without warning, killing those he was born to rule.

But Cobalt 60 has friends among the non-mutants—including Franklin Gothic Green, who is upset, for aliens have been mining and destroying his precious archaeological dig sites. Worse, these aliens, the Bigeyes, have formed a temporary alliance with the Radio people, to seek ancient nuclear weapons and the lost wealth of the legendary IRS. To thwart them, Cobalt and Franklin have formed their own alliance with the Croc cavalry, an army of crazed, ravenous mutants whose leader General Hisstory is for some reason devotedly loyal to Cobalt 60.

HEY SIR!
YES, MR. BLISTERBY?
WE FOUND THOSE RADIATION SOURCES! THERE IS SIX LASERS HIDDEN AROUND AND ABOUT!
LASERS! THEY AR'TT RADIO OWNED ARE THEY?!
SURE ARE, SIR! THEY IS POWERIN THEM WITH OLD FISSION BOMBS TURNED INTO POWER PLUGS!
DID YOU DEAL WITH DEM?
DIDN'T HAVE TO SIR! SOMEBODY BEAT ME TO IT. CUT THE CREW UP AND DISABLED THE LASERS
WHAT ABOUT DA BOMBS
SPIKED DEM SIR, THEY CANT GO OFF..
GOOD WORK BLISTERBY! TELL DA WORM WE IS LEAVIN'. THESE RADIOS ARE UP TO NO GOOD!
AHH, THERES THAT SCUM, POLONIUM 210! IM GONNA GO TALK TO HIM, WHEN I RAISE AND DROP MY APPENDAGE, DAT'S DA GO MARK!
YES, SIR!
ALL RIGHT SIRE! EVERYTHING IS READY NOW YOU GO GET UNDER COVER...
WHAT! WHAT ABOUT YOU!!
DONT WORRY ABOUT ME, IM GOING TO TALK TO BIGEYE WHEN I DROP MY ARM THATS THE SIGNAL TO ATTACK!!
210, WE BEEN DIGGING ALL DAY THERE IS NOTHIN' HERE!
KEEP DIGGING BIGEYES, THIS WAS A BIG OERE

© 1985 Barbara Bodé and Mark Bodé

WELL MY DETECTION INSTRUMENTS DONT DETECT ANYTHING EITHER!
THATS WHAT YOU GET FER BUYING OLD WAR SURPLUS EQUIPMENT!!
WELL IM OF A MIND TO QUIT AND TAKE DIS SHIP SOME PLACE ELSE!
QUIT!
YAH Y'KNOW DROP IT!
DROP IT!
FOOOOOSHH
CHARGE! DEM RADIOS!

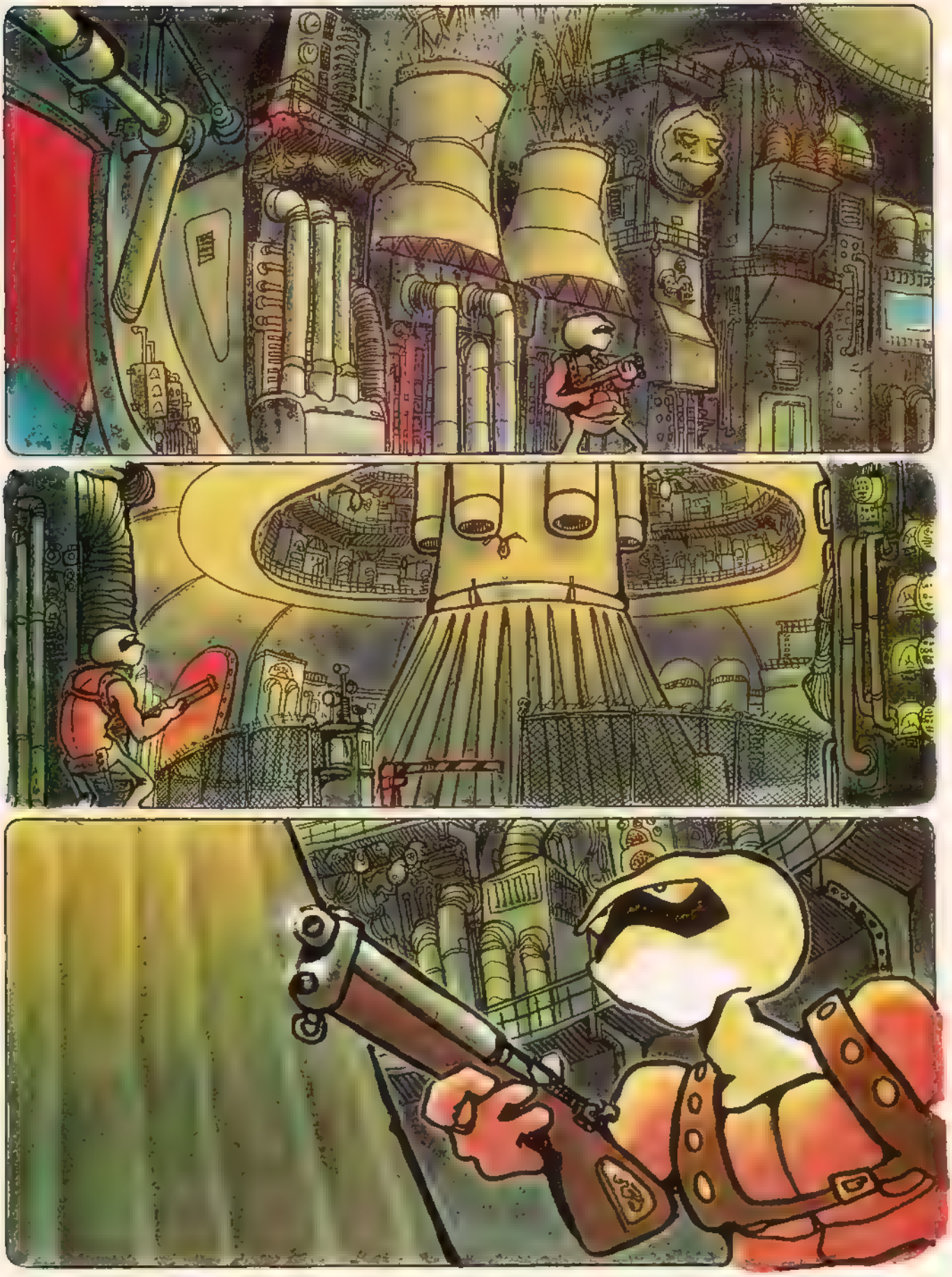
WHAT'S HAPPENING?!
YOUR MEN ARE ATTACKING MINE
NO YOURS ARE ATTACKING MINE!
YES? DEN WHO ARE ALL DOSE THINGS OUT THERE!
I DON'T KNOW. SOME KIND OF MUTANTS!
MUTANTS! I SEE WELL, I HAVE DIS BIG LASER!
PUNT!

EERROG!
GAK!
FLUMP!
EERRR..
GRASSER!
EEEERRR..
THEY...KILLED...YOU...
"SNIFF"
SO LONG, GREAT BEAST...
I WILL MISS YOU....

SNIFF
THERE'S THE HOODED ONE!
BASTARDS!
RUN!
COBALTGO, I WILL CLEAR DA WAY FER YOU, WIFF MY 80 CALIBURE, BOLT ACTION, SADDLE CANNON...
BOOMPH
CHOW CHOW CHOW CHOW CHOW THUMPA-THUMPA-THUMP!

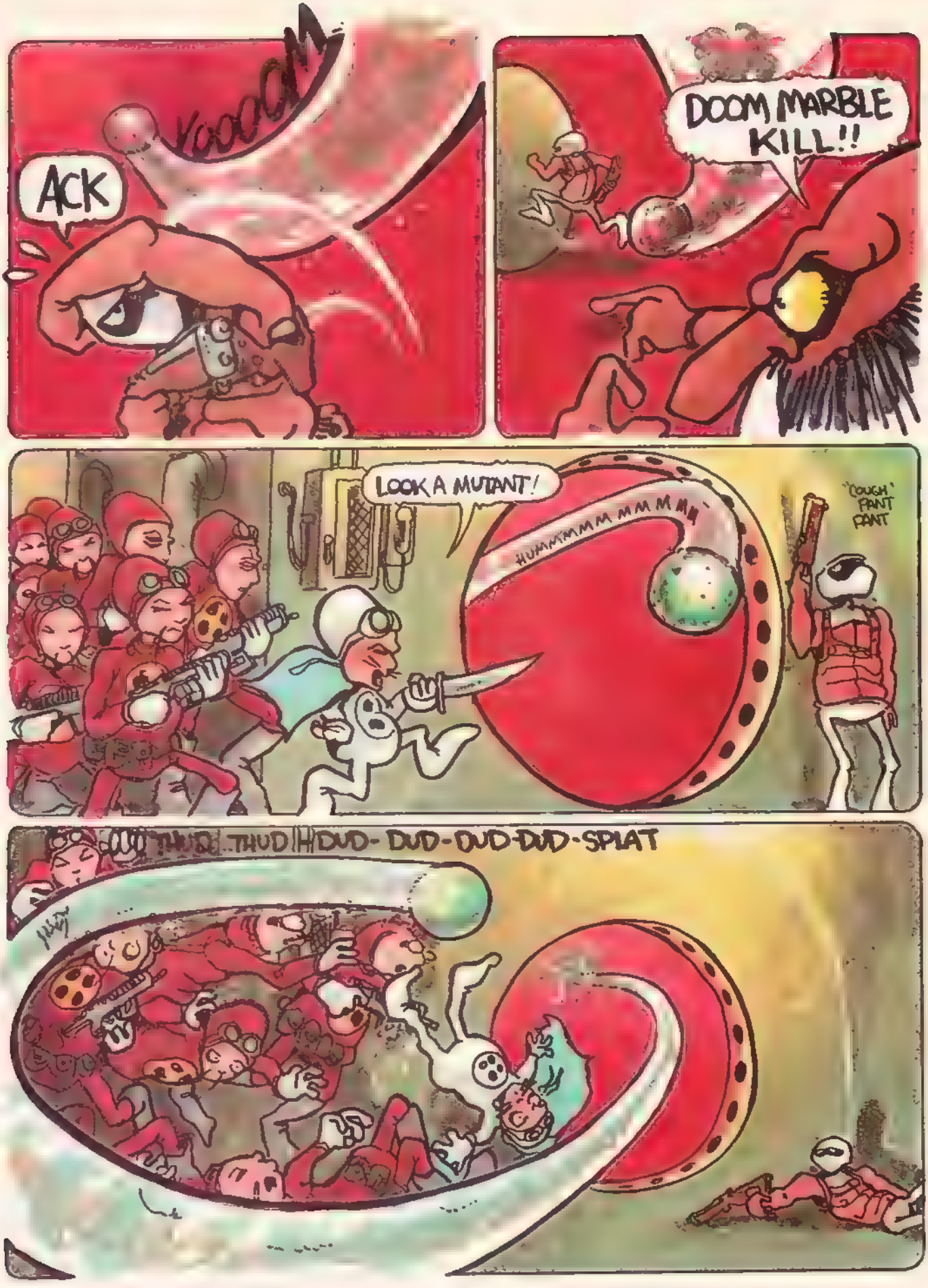
STUG STUG
STUG-DUG-
DUG-DUG-
DUG-DUG-
STUG DUG-DUG-DUG
PUNT PUNT PUNT
STUG-DUG-DUG-
PUNT
THA-SHIP!

BLAM!



THIS PLACE IS ENORMOUS.. IT'S..... SO... HUGE...
"BLIP"
VOICES!
"CLAC"
YOU BARBARIAN GET OFF THIS SHIP!
THE TIME TOWER IS MINE, AIR BAG!
PUNT
"CLAC"
PUNT

IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME WHEN THEY FIGHT ONLY OUTSIDE. BUT I DID HEAR A GUN JUST NOW.
SCOOCH SCOOCH
DOOM MARBLE!
PUNT!
P-TANG
YOU FOOL!


YOOOOM
ACK
DOOM MARBLE KILL!!
LOOK A MUTANT!
HUMMMMM MMMM
'COUGH' PANT PANT
THUD THUD DUD-DUD-DUD-DUD-SPLAT

HHHUMMM

YOU KILLED MY MOTHER..
NO! I DIDN'T IT WASN'T ME! EH...
YOU HAD MY GUARDIANESS KILLED....
NO..IT..WASNT...
NO!
CHOKE
YOU THOUGHT YOU KILLED ME!
HE IS KILLED... THE REIGN IS OVER...
STRONTIUM 90 IS DEAD!
SEIZE THAT MURDERER!
HE KILLED OUR EMPEROR!
SO WHAT HE WAS AN ASSHOLE!

WUMP
ACK!
WER-RRR-RR-RR-RRRRRRR
AND GOOD RIDDANCE TO YOUR MISERABLE PLANET!!
STAND CLEAR THE SHIP IS TAKING OFF!!
WUMPA-WUMPA-WUMPA-WUMPA-

WELL SHIT! THERE GOES MY RIDE BACK TO ALGOL!
SHUT UP, FLY BOY...
CRACK BOOM!
SO! ITS THE WHITE CLOTH, LETS FIND OUT WHO WE HAVE HERE...
NO!
SHUT UP MUTANT!
OFF WITH IT THEN...
GASP! IT'S FE56!
NO, FE 56 IS DEAD ITS GOT TO BE-
HIS SON, COBALT GO!
SCREW ALL OF YOU MONSTERS!
LET ME GO!
SORRY, YOU'LL EITHER BE KING OR YOU'LL BE SHOT!

RADIO THE CITY, TELL THEM WE HAVE WON AND THE TRUE KING HAS BEEN FOUND..
ANYTHING ELSE 151?..
OH, YES... HE WAS RESCUED FROM A TROOP OF MUTANTS IN A CLIMATIC BATTLE IN WHICH STRONTIUM90 AND POLONIUM 210 DIED IN A VALIANT STRUGGLE
AND I, EUROPIUM 151 BY VIRTUE OF RANK AM COMMANDING OFFICER OF ALL RADIO ARMIES. I WANT A RAISE IN PAY FOR ALL SOLDIERS!
YES SIR!
AND YOU WILL THANK ME SOME DAY...
RADIO SCUM!
PETOOO
EH!
I OUGHTA KICK YOUR TEETH IN FOR THAT, SIRE. BUT I DONT WANT TO BE IMPRISONED NEXT WEEK!
I'D LIKE TO SEE YOUR BRAINS SPLATTERED OVER YOUR DEAD SOLDIERS!!
PUT MY HOOD BACK ON YOU SHITS! LET ME GO! PANT PANT
WU, HAVE THE MEDIC GIVE HIS MAJESTY A SEDATIVE. I FEAR THIS HAS BEEN A TRYING DAY FOR HIM, AS IT HAS BEEN FOR ALL OF US...
YES, 151 SIR!

I SEE HIS MASK IS BACK IN PLACE.
HE DEMANDED IT. HE IS THE KING. HE CALMED RIGHT DOWN THEN.
WELL, IF IT MAKES HIM FEEL MORE SECURE LET HIM WEAR IT!
I FELT YOU'D AGREE SIR... WERE READY TO MOVE OUT, SIR.
HAIL COBALT 60!! HAIL THE KING!
MARK

END OF THE FIRST HALF

MEDIAVIEW

by Dennis O'Neil

Of course, we were laughing at **Woody Allen's** humor before we knew who he was. While he was still in his teens, while he was still **Allen Stewart Konigsberg,** of Brooklyn, he was contributing material to **Your Show of Shows,** a 90-minute variety program NBC broadcast on Saturday nights. His fellow contributors included **Sid Caesar, Imogene Coca, Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner, Howard Morris, Neil Simon**—the prime movers of a generation's comedy. (Although I knew nothing of the rigors of professional writing and performing, the sub-adolescent me wondered how they could do so *much* so *well* every *week*. Now I know it was simple: all they had to do was perform miracles.)

Where did we encounter **Allen,** nee **Konigsberg,** again? Hard to say. Maybe on a talk show or a record, doing his stand-up act, his hilarious and achingly real rendition of a four-eyed, skinny, non-athletic loser consumed with envy and never-to-be-consummated lust that the rest of us similarly burdened losers could both identify with and find comfort in; if **Woody** could laugh at himself, we could laugh at ourselves, and the laughter lessened the pain. (Later, when **Woody** began to date some lovely and famous women, the kind usually profoundly unaware of a loser's existence, he filled us with vicarious triumph; that wasn't just **Woody Allen** with **Diane Keaton** on his arm, that was the whole of loserdom, glowing and vindicated.)

Then came the first movie, **What's New Pussycat,** which **Woody** wrote and performed in as a second lead. I haven't seen it for twenty years, but I remember disliking it; lots of frantic motion and **Peter O'Toole** trying desperately not to be Lawrence of Arabia. **Woody** has said that he doesn't like it either.

Call **Pussycat** a bad beginning. Fortunately, it was only the beginning. Next, **Woody** took a bad Japanese-made **James Bond** rip-off, dubbed in new dialogue, added a bit of new footage and gave us the unique and very funny **What's Up, Tiger Lily?** He then partially wrote and had a role in another **James Bond** send-up, **Casino Royale,** directed by **John Huston,** and wrote but did not act in **Don't Drink the Water.** But his film career really got started with **Take the Money and Run,** a boisterous parody of gangster movies, which he wrote, starred in and, significantly, directed. He repeated his writer-director-star turn in **Bananas** and—here, at last, is why a column devoted to science-fiction and fantasy is discussing a comedian—**Sleeper.** This is a reworking of the Rip Van Winkle story with a science-fiction rationale, lots of sight gags, some satire and liberal doses of what has become the **Allen** hallmark, bittersweet comments on sex and relationships. With **Sleeper, Woody** became something more than a comic.

He has ventured into fantasy three more times to date. **Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Sex** is a loose, unstructured shambles of a movie with some fantasy elements, most notably the episode involving an ambulatory beast, memorable because **Woody** tried so hard to make it work, and failed. In 1984, **Woody** gave us the splendid **Zelig,** the plot of which is a direct descendant of **Woody's** old stand-up routines: a nerd wants so desperately to be liked and accepted that he evolves the ability to become whomever best fits in with whatever situation he encounters. **Zelig's** story is extremely slight, but the movie is an achievement nonetheless because **Woody** casts it as a documentary about a turn-of-the-century man and flawlessly matches his newly-shot footage with scratchy relics from film historical societies. As artists from medieval court painters to modern jazzmen have always known, sometimes form is more interesting than content.

And that brings us to **The Purple Rose of Cairo, Woody's** latest offering. In this, **Woody** summarizes his dual career as a popular entertainer and capital-A artist thus far, and in the process makes his most blatant use of fantasy. Here, his loser is a woman, an ineffectual, perpetual victim who hides in movie theaters to escape the awfulness of her waitress job and the abuse of her neanderthal husband. During a matinee, she notices a character in a rather ordinary Hollywood programmer staring at her. This fictional person, a boyishly handsome explorer, steps from the screen and begins to woo her. What follows is comedy on several levels. Much of it comes from the usual raw material of humor—one-liners, sight gags, the interaction of exaggerated personalities. But **Woody** is not content with these kinds of laughs; he wants to explore his absurd premise. If this occurred in the real world, he asks, deadpan, what would happen? To the actor who played the errant explorer? To the film's producers? To the theater owners? To the movie industry as a whole? These questions and answers are funny in themselves, and they allow **Woody** to take some satirical shots at mass culture—show biz, the movies.

Purple Rose is, at least in part, a movie about movies. In this, it is not unusual. It seems to me that about half the movies I see these days are about other movies. These range from the blatant, the ones that actually use old footage like **Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid,** to those that are obviously inspired by old movies rather than by life—the **Star Wars** saga, the **Indiana Jones** adventures, **Ghost Busters, Body Heat.** It is to be expected. For the past three decades or so, the media have been a dominant—maybe *the* dominant—force in American life, the glue which holds us together. As a rule, artists use what they know, and a lot of us know movies and television better than anything else. **Woody Allen** is probably among us. As far back as **Your Show of Shows,** he was parodying popular—and not so popular—mass fiction.

But, I think, **Woody Allen** has the soul of a philosopher in his comedian's body, and that causes him to question: What is this preoccupation with media doing to us? **The Purple Rose of Cairo** is his answer, and a bitter one it is. After she's been betrayed by her movie lover, after her involvement with him has cost her everything—job, marriage, self-respect—**Woody's** heroine returns to the theater. It is the only place she can find comfort. **Woody Allen** seems to be saying that our national preoccupation with prefabricated dreams has rendered our own lives without meaning—the imaginary has destroyed the real. That insight makes **The Purple Rose of Cairo Woody Allen's** saddest, fullest and finest work.

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FUTUREVIEW

by John Robert Tebbel and Martha Thomases

Something there is that doesn't love a new idea. All Americans are supposed to love, even worship new things. It's the *new* world after all. If things were fine back in the old country, none of this would've gotten started. Instead, Europeans would be standing shoulder to shoulder back on the other side of the Atlantic, wondering when a good plague would come along to clean out some of the riffraff and vacate some decent apartments.

Ingenuity is the Yankee family name, but if your new idea is **7-Up**, don't expect a rapturous welcome from your local **Coca-Cola** bottler. Every new idea pushes an old one over the edge, or tries to. Proprietors of existing dogma and technology hear the words, "New and Improved!" and prepare to repel boarders.

This attitude helps insure domestic tranquility and the orderly administration of titanic business enterprise. It also forces inventors to be more than usually creative and, most important, persistant.

The creators of the **Laserdisc** video playback system had a technological tiger by the tail. They had a truly new way to skin the cat. Too bad all the other electronics manufacturers were busy flogging videocassette recorders, a new package of an old idea. One voice screaming in the wilderness has no audience.

The microcomputing revolution recently congealed into the microcomputing government of blood and iron. Gleeful garage hackers and their mad profusion of instant fortunes gave way to the **IBM** juggernaut, which now calls the tune, the step, the time, the price and anything else it wants. (**IBM** is a registered trademark of **International Business Machines, Corp.**, sir.)

America is a very large market. Hard to influence. One of the worst kept secrets of music business success is that it's a lot easier to get noticed in England, where you don't need an international conglomerate behind you to get your records in the stores and on the radio. Ask any successful English band, from **The Beatles** to **Frankie Goes to Hollywood**. Or ask those Americans who went to London for their first hits, from **Jimi Hendrix** to the **Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde.**

So what's an American innovator to do? Are attempts to interest the American public in an idea doomed to be an instant replay of **Bambi Meets Godzilla?**

Not always. Usually, but not always. Care to get on the side of the forces of the new? Try, or try to find, some of these:

FrozeFruit—is to a regular **Popsicle** what a steak dinner is to a **Big Mac.** It's a summertime frozen treat on a stick, but instead of being artificially flavored and colored, it's naturally flavored and full of real fruit. The amazingly true-to-life flavors include the ones you'd expect (i.e. cherry, lemon, orange) but also watermelon, cantaloupe, raspberry, lime, honeydew and other seasonal delights. They don't have any cane sugar (sucrose) and they do have chunks of fruit and even seeds. It's the first frozen treat to really give you something to chew on. In our town, a little panel truck cruises the smaller groceries; we haven't yet seen them in a supermarket. They actually taste like fruit. You won't believe it. Trust us.

The Mountain/City Bicycle—The ever-present ten speed bicycles are great for recreation and transportation along normal roadways. Roads outside the suburbs and rural areas, however, are often quite far from normal. This condition causes many trashings of tenspeeds and the use of many heavy clunkers more suited to child's play. Now, a hybrid of tenspeed and onespeed is available. It's lighter than the clunker and stronger than the tenspeed. Pockmarked trails and potholed city streets won't trash this two-wheeled wonder. A good one costs ten to twenty percent more than a tenspeed of comparable quality because there isn't enough demand yet to permit the economies of mass production. You should be able to make up the difference in unblown-out tires.

Axlon's Talking Teddy Bear—Nolan Bushnell, who, in his wisdom, gave us **Pong, Atari,** and **Chuck E. Cheese,** has a new company, **Axlon.** A person who has followed the story so far might expect a holographic game or a rocket back pack, but this person would be wrong. The first product is the stuffed and fuzzy **A.G. Bear. A.G.** (for Alexander Graham) looks sweet and cute, just like other bears. And, like other bears, you can talk to this one, admit all your most intimate dreams, ask the secret of the universe, and point out all the interesting things in your life that no one else has time for. Unlike other bears, this one will answer you. Not in words, exactly, but in tones that approximate your own and in a pitch that indicates agreement or curiosity. For less than fifty dollars, it can be cheaper than a session with a psychiatrist and probably as effective.

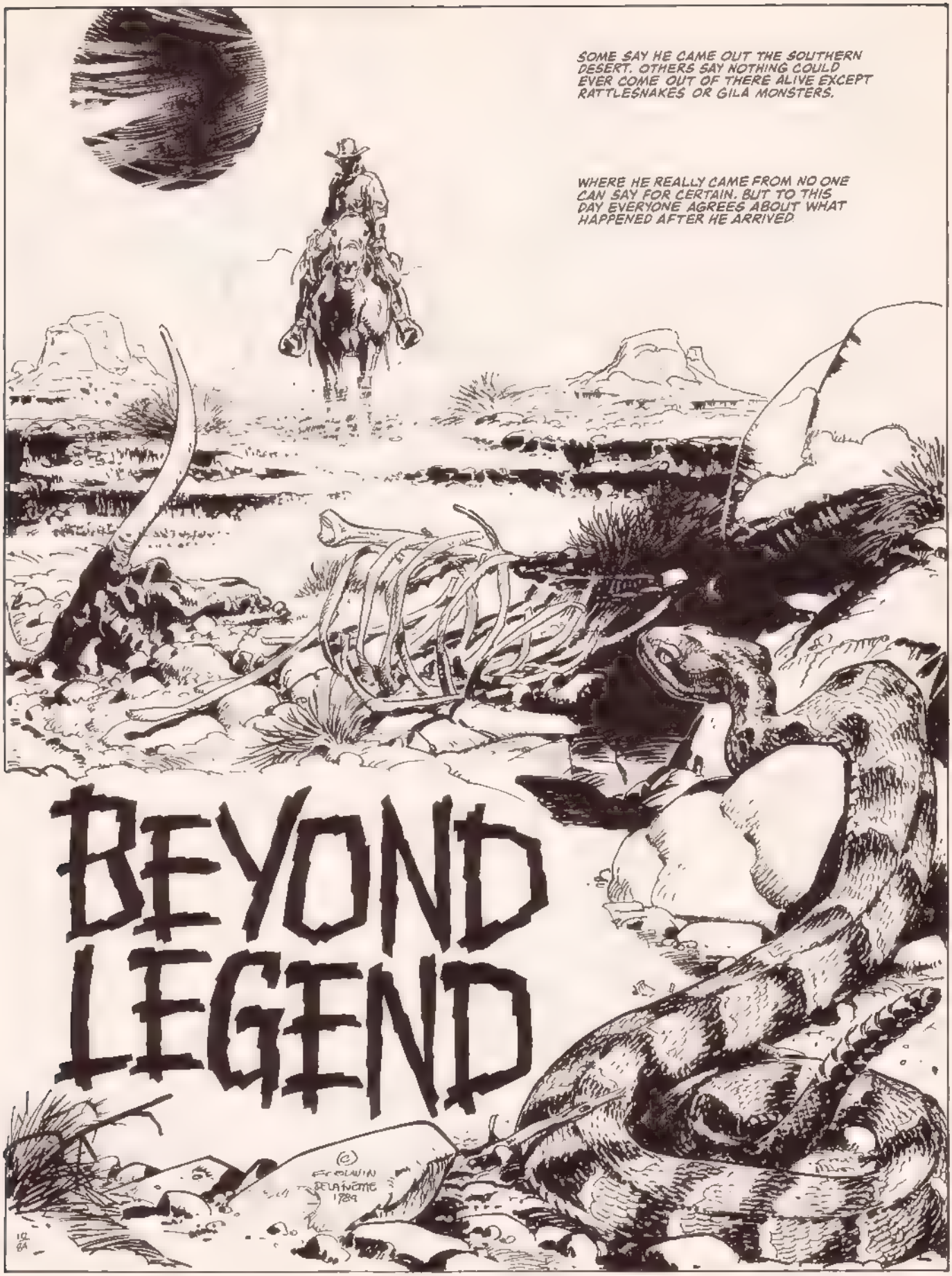
So pay attention, America! Individually, consumers are powerless to affect what they buy. But, as part of a market segment, we have all the power we need. A herd made up of more thoughtful consumers might choose more wisely. Trust yourself, your ability to do what you set out to do, and the legitimacy of your purpose.

In the meantime, be happy in your work, and don't look back: Someone is working hard to make your favorite pastime obsolete.

PROLOGUE
THE MESSENGER MOVES THROUGH THE CORRIDORS OF THE MYSTIC CITADEL. THROUGH ALL ITS MYRIAD BYWAYS HIS TREAD IS STEADY AND UNHESITATING...
. FOR HE HAS MADE THIS JOURNEY MANY TIMES.
YOU ARE NEEDED, WARRIOR.
AGAIN...? SO SOON?

story © 1985 Archie Goodwin/artwork © 1985 Victor de la Fuente

MY WOUNDS HAVE BARELY HEALED SINCE THE LAST TIME
THE POTION-MAKERS ASSURED US THAT THEIR BALMS AND OINTMENTS HAD RESTORED YOU TO YOUR FULLEST POWERS
I DON'T FEEL RESTED I'M WEARY... IF NOT IN MY BONES, PERHAPS IN MY SOUL.
WE MAKE GREAT DEMANDS UPON YOU IT CAN'T BE EASY, WE KNOW. YET THE TASK IS OF SUCH IMPORTANCE
I USED TO FEEL THE SAME. BUT NOW AFTER SO MANY TIMES.. PERHAPS IT'S DOUBT THAT MAKES ME TIRED.
WELL, WHAT THIS TIME? BARBARIAN SWORDSMAN...? DESERT ARCHER...? GLADIATOR, PERHAPS...?
WHEN I AM SENT TO YOU, I KNOW ONLY THAT THERE IS NEED. AS ALWAYS, ALL OTHER ANSWERS AWAIT OUT THERE...
BEYOND...
WITH A CURT NOD, THE WARRIOR STRIDES FORWARD . AND SWIFTLY VANISHES INTO THE MIST.


SOME SAY HE CAME OUT THE SOUTHERN DESERT. OTHERS SAY NOTHING COULD EVER COME OUT OF THERE ALIVE EXCEPT RATTLESNAKES OR GILA MONSTERS.
WHERE HE REALLY CAME FROM NO ONE CAN SAY FOR CERTAIN. BUT TO THIS DAY EVERYONE AGREES ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED AFTER HE ARRIVED
BEYOND LEGEND
© ERBALWIN DELAVERNE 1984

FROM LATER INVESTIGATION, THEY EVEN AGREE ABOUT THE FIRST SIGHT THAT GREETED HIM BEYOND THE DESERT.
WELCOME TO BUFFALO SKULL-- ANYTHING GOES... IF YOU CAN PAY THE PRICE
HOPE YOU DON'T INTEND CUTTIN' THEM JASPERS DOWN--
--NOT WHEN OUR BOSS, MR. BRAND, GAVE PARTICULAR ORDERS THEY WAS TO DANGLE 'TIL THEY ROT.
'SPECIALLY WHEN WE WORKED SO HARD PUTTIN' 'EM UP THERE.

LOOKED LIKE ONE MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE.
UNLIKELY. WE SHOT 'EM UP A BIT FIRST--
-- BUT SINCE YOU'RE CONCERNED, WE CAN JUST STRING YOU BESIDE 'EM FOR A GOOD CLOSE LOOK.
SORT OF A WARNIN' NOT TO CRITICIZE THE WORK OF OTHERS... LEAST NOT WHEN YOUR GUN HAND IS OCCUPIED.
I USE EITHER HAND--
KA-POW
KRAK
CHUK!
--ONE ABOUT AS WELL AS THE OTHER!
BLAM
ONE OF THE DEPUTIES LIVED LONG ENOUGH TO TELL THAT MUCH IF THERE HAD BEEN A SURVIVOR ON THE HANGING TREE... THEY DIDN'T LAST TO BE HELPED.
HE CAME TO BUFFALO SKULL AS HE STARTED... ALONE.

YOU THE PLACE'S ONLY CITIZEN, SON? I'VE SEEN GHOSTTOWNS LIVELIER THAN THIS ON A SATURDAY
THEY'RE ALL PAYIN' TAXES.
MY PA SAYS EVERYTHIN' STOPS ON TAX DAY--
--UNLESS YOU RE IN THE RIGHT BUSINESS
PLACE SEEMS TO HAVE CHANGED HANDS RECENTLY.
MY PA SAYS THINGS ARE ALWAYS CHANG.N'. BUT HE SAYS THEY ON.Y GET BETTER FOR FOLKS LIKE MR BRAND
THAT'S WHERE MY PA IS, MISTER . WITH EVERYONE ELSE... PAYIN' MR BRAND. IF YOU SEE HIM, COULD YOU TELL HIM TO HURRY PLEASE?
I GET KIND'A WORRIED WAIT:N' THIS LONG

THE PARADISE WAS USUALLY THE NOISIEST PLACE IN THREE TERRITORIES. BUT THE MOMENT HE ENTERED WAS ONE OF UNNATURAL QUIET... EXCEPT FOR THE SOUND OF A PIANO, PLAYING MUSIC MORE SUITED TO A CONCERT HALL THAN A SALOON AND GAMBLING PLACE.
AM I BEING CHALLENGED, GENTLEMEN?
WORD'S SPREAD ABOUT HOW GOOD YOU GOT IT HERE, BRAND HOW YOU JUST POPPED UP OF A SUDDEN AN' BUFFALOED EVERY-BODY IN SIGHT
MAYBE YOU BEIN' ABLE TO TORTURE SUCH NOISE FROM A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT NATURALLY SCARES SOME FOLKS US .. WE AIN'T SO DELICATE. WE'RE DEALIN' OURSELVES IN, PIANO MAN!
NOW I DON'T KNOW WHO SPREAD THE PARTICULAR WORD THAT TEMPTED YOU GENTLEMEN HERE--
--BUT REGRETFULLY IT DIDN'T INCLUDE WARNING OF WHAT I KEEP HIDDEN ON MY PIANO BENCH TO DEAL WITH SUCH OCCASIONS!
BDAM!
BDOM!

--MIGHT WELL HAVE STIRRED UP THOSE VULTURES TO GET FREE OF THE BURDEN! RUNNING IS LIKE ADMITTING YOUR GUILT ...TO WHAT I JUDGE A HANGING OFFENSE!
BRAND. FOR GOD'S SAKE! I'M A WIDOWER... STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE AS IT IS! IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO ME MY SON CAN'T--

MAYBE YOU COULD MAKE AN EXCEPTION THIS ONCE ...FOR THE BOY'S SAKE.
HIS VOICE WASN'T LOUD, BUT EVERYONE IN THE PARADISE HEARD IT. AND NO ONE WAS SLOW LETTING HIM THROUGH...

...TO FACE BRAND. THEIR EYES LOCKED AND THOUGH NEITHER MAN SAID MUCH, WHO COULD GUESS WHAT WAS IN THEIR MINDS?
DO I KNOW YOU?
I THINK WE MET BEFORE, BRAND--

"--A LONG TIME AGO."
SIRE! THE REBELS HAVE REGROUPED! WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO REPEL ANOTHER ASSAULT!
THEY'RE PEASANT RABBLE WHIPPED INTO AN ARMY! WITHOUT PROPER LEADERSHIP, THEY'RE A DULL MOB--

(continues on page 60)

THEY ARE TRAVELLERS--RARE, QUICKSILVER CREATURES WHO SHIMMER WITH EERIE ELDRICH MAGIC--
AND THEY BEAR THE STRONGEST TALISMAN IN ALL THE WORLDS...
The Sword of Sh'rii
THE HUMANS OF THIS WORLD RARELY SEE BEINGS LIKE THESE TWO.
WHEN THEY DO, THEY CALL THEM THEENA SHEE--THE HIGH-COURT FOLK OF FAERIE--CREATURES TO BE AVOIDED IF POSSIBLE (FOR 'TIS WELL KNOWN THAT THOSE WHO TREAT WITH "WILDFOLK" MAY HAVE ELF-MAGICK VISITED UPON THEM... SOMETIMES TO THEIR PROFIT--BUT OFT TIMES TO THEIR SORROW)!
NO HUMAN EAR LISTENS AS THE TALL FAIR ELVEN LORD MURMURS SOFTLY... ESOTERIC WORDS THAT MAKE THE SWORD PULSE WITH RADIANT POWER AND HURT THE EARS OF HIS COMPANION.

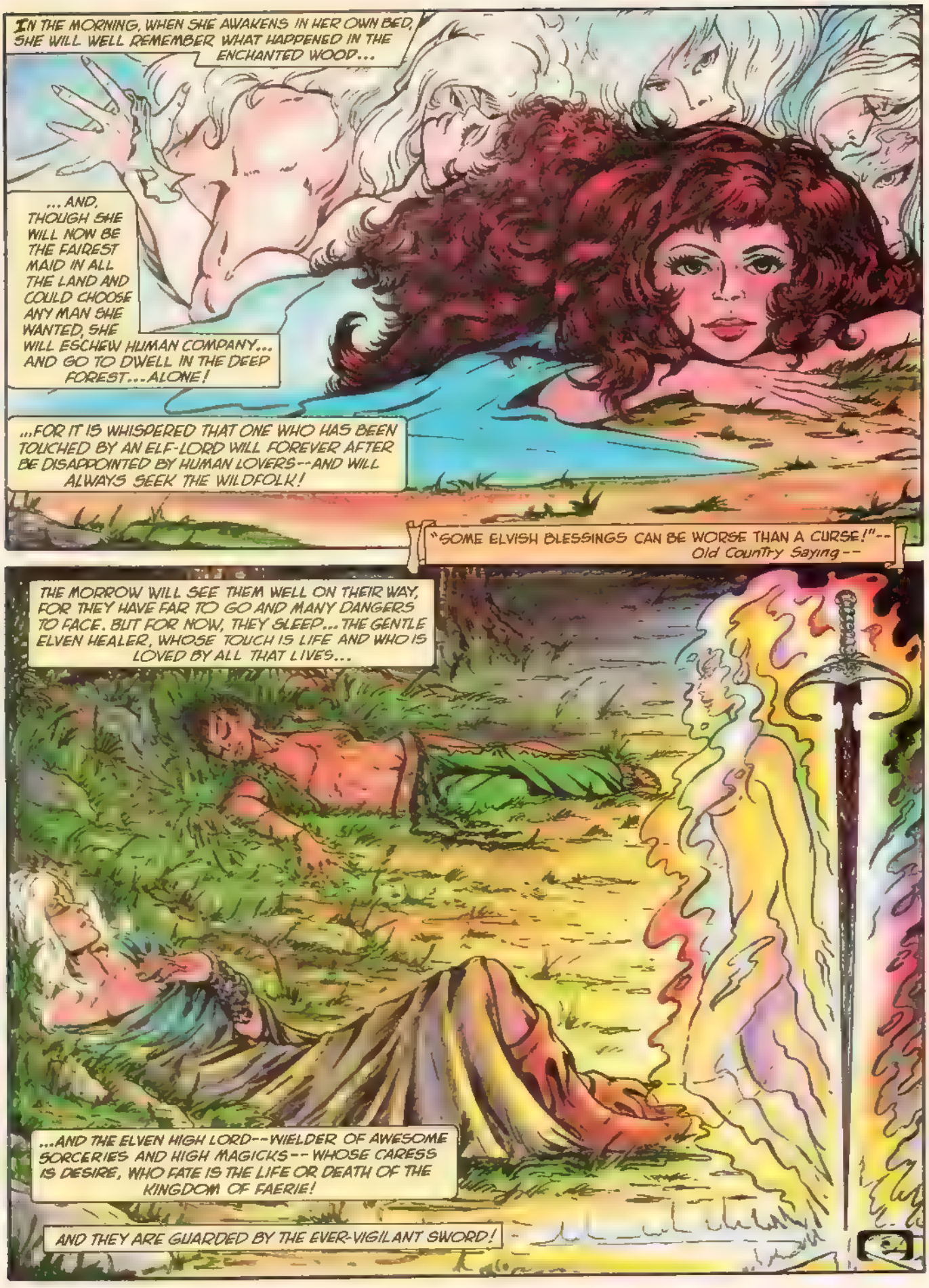
© 1985 Paty Cockrum

THE SWORD. IT.. SPEAKS TO YOU?
SOMETIMES, SERGI, SOMETIMES IT SINGS TO ME... AND SOMETIMES...
...IT WHISPERS!
YES... IT LIVES! I CAN FEEL THE PULSE OF IT!
STRONG SORCERY, SH'RLII. I AM GLAD IT DOES NOT CALL ME, "MASTER"!
NEVERTHELESS, IT GUARDS US WELL WHEN WE REST. NOTHING HARMFUL TO US CAN BREACH ITS CIRCLE OF MAGIC LIGHT.
ITS HUE IS REMINISCENT OF THE LADY. IS IT OF HER WORKING?
THE LADY? SHE WHO IS BY LEGEND MY PERFECT MATE... SHE WHOM EVERYONE SEES...
.. EXCEPT ME!?
YOU'VE NEVER SEEN THE LADY? M'LORD, SURELY YOU JEST!

OH--ONCE, WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I SAW HER IN PROCESSION WITH THE SEELIE COURT.
BEAUTIFUL BEYOND ALL DREAMS OF BEAUTY SHE WAS. SHE HALTED THE RADE, APPROACHED ME, LOOKED DEEP INTO MY EYES AND SMILED. WHEN I AWOKE -- AS FROM A TRANCE -- SHE AND THE COURT WERE GONE!
Ahh, YES, I REMEMBER! SHE KNEW YOUR POWER... EVEN BEFORE IT DEVELOPED!
SHE KNEW YOU WOULD BECOME SH'RLI! -- HIGHEST ONE--AND HER CONSORT!
CONSORT? FROM THAT DAY TO THIS I HAVE NEVER LAID EYES ON HER!
PERHAPS MY LORD, YOU SIMPLY DO NOT KNOW WHERE TO LOOK
SERGI! DO YOU KNOW MORE THAN YOU HAVE SAID? TELL ME
IT IS NOT THAT SIMPLE, ELELOWYN.
I AM CONSTRAINED BY... DO NOT, I BEG YOU, PRESS ME.
PEACE! SUCH MISUSE OF MY POWER WOULD NOT BE SEEMLY
THEN, BY YOUR LEAVE, I WILL AWAY TO YONDER TOR... THE FULL MOON IS HIGH AND I WOULD SPIN MAGIC FROM ITS BLESSED SILVERLIGHT!
REAL MOONLIGHT WAS SO RARE IN OUR HAVEN.
BE WARY, HEALER THE HUMANS OF THIS WORLD ARE CURIOUS ABOUT US--AND SOME HAVE LEARNED THAT IRON CAN DISRUPT OUR POWERS. SOME MAY EVEN SEEK TO ENSLAVE US.

LATER HE DANCES THE WILD UNTAMED DANCES OF FAERIE--WHICH BID THE VERY ROCKS AND TREES TO SING--AND CALLS WILD MAGIC IN SHIMMERING STREAMS FROM THE VOID TO SWIRL AROUND HIM...
NOR HAS THIS STARLIT DISPLAY GONE UNNOTICED...
YOU SEE, FATHER. I TOLD YOU I SAW STRANGE LIGHTS ON THE TOR.
AYE, LASS. 'TIS THE THEENA SHEE.
NONE BUT THE FAERIE-FOLK DANCES SO WILD AND GODLESS--FREE AT MIDNIGHT! COME, WE HAVE MUCH TO DO!
AND SO, IT IS NOT MUCH LATER THAT THE ELF'S MAD CAREEN IS HALTED BY THE SCENT OF SWEET MILK AND HONEY--HIS FAVORITE REFRESHMENT.
HIS COMPANION'S WARNING IS FRESH IN HIS MIND. IS THIS A TRAP? IS THE OFFERING DRUGGED?
IF SO, IT IS A FUTILE EFFORT--FOR, THOUGH OTHERS OF HIS KIND MAY THUS BE DUPED, AN ELVEN MASTER-HEALER CAN, WITH HIS POWER, DISCERN THE TINIEST GRAIN OF HARMFUL SUBSTANCE.
THE GIFT IS IN GOOD FAITH, FOR THE COUNTRY PEOPLE KNOW WELL THE WHIMS OF 'WILDFOLK'--WHOSE IRE CAN DESTROY AND WHOSE PLEASURE CAN BLESS! HE DRINKS DEEPLY--AND AS HE DOES, LIFE BLOOMS GREEN AND RICH AND FERTILE AROUND HIM...
THEN, IN A SWIRL OF STARDUST, HE IS GONE--LEAVING ONLY THE EMPTY VESSEL...
...AND A SOFT SPRINKLING OF LIGHT ON THE SHOULDERS OF HUMANS WHO HAD THOUGHT THEMSELVES WELL HIDDEN!
AHH, FATHER, DID YE SEE? SO... BEAUTIFUL.
AYE, AND UNCOMMON GRATEFUL! THIS ONCE BARREN LAND IS NOW A GARDEN...
THE FARMER, IN HIS WONDER, WILL NAME THIS PLACE 'FAERIEHILL,' AND WILL WHISPER EERIE TALES OF THIS NIGHT...FOR THUS ARE LEGENDS BORN!

AND ELSEWHERE ...
OHHHH...
WHAT DO YOU HERE, HUMAN?
AHHHH!
GOOD SIR... I'M SORRY... I DID NOT MEAN TO INTRUDE...
BE AT EASE, CHILD, I'LL NOT HARM YOU. HOW CAME YOU HERE?
MY FATHER AND FAIR SISTER SAW STRANGE LIGHTS ON THE TOR, AND FOUND A WONDROUS BEING AND GOT MILK AND HONEY FOR HIM--AS LEGENDS TELL US THE ELVEN FOLK LOVE TO SIP.
AS WE TOOK OUR GIFTS THROUGH THE WOOD I SAW A LIGHT TO ONE SIDE AND BETHOUGHT ME THERE MIGHT BE MORE THAN ONE FAERIE CREATURE IN THE WOOD THIS NIGHT.
WERE YOU NOT AFRAID TO COME ALONE?
NO, M'LORD. ONE AS ILL-FAVORED AS I AM IS NEVER BOTHERED... AND THESE WOODLANDS ARE MORE HOME TO ME THAN MY FATHER'S CROFT. SIR... ARE YE TRULY OF THE ELVEN-FOLK?
AYE, LASS. I AM LORD OF ALL THE THEENA SHEE... AND I WOT THAT YOUR SPIRIT IS NIGH UNTO OURS...
MAYHAP YOUR FORM SHOULD MATCH THAT FEY NATURE.
HIS NAME IS ELELOWYN--WHICH MEANS 'DESIRE'--AND FEW CAN RESIST HIS TOUCH...
...CERTAINLY NOT THIS YOUNG HUMAN WHOSE VERY SKIN FLOWS AND MELDS BENEATH HIS CARESS.

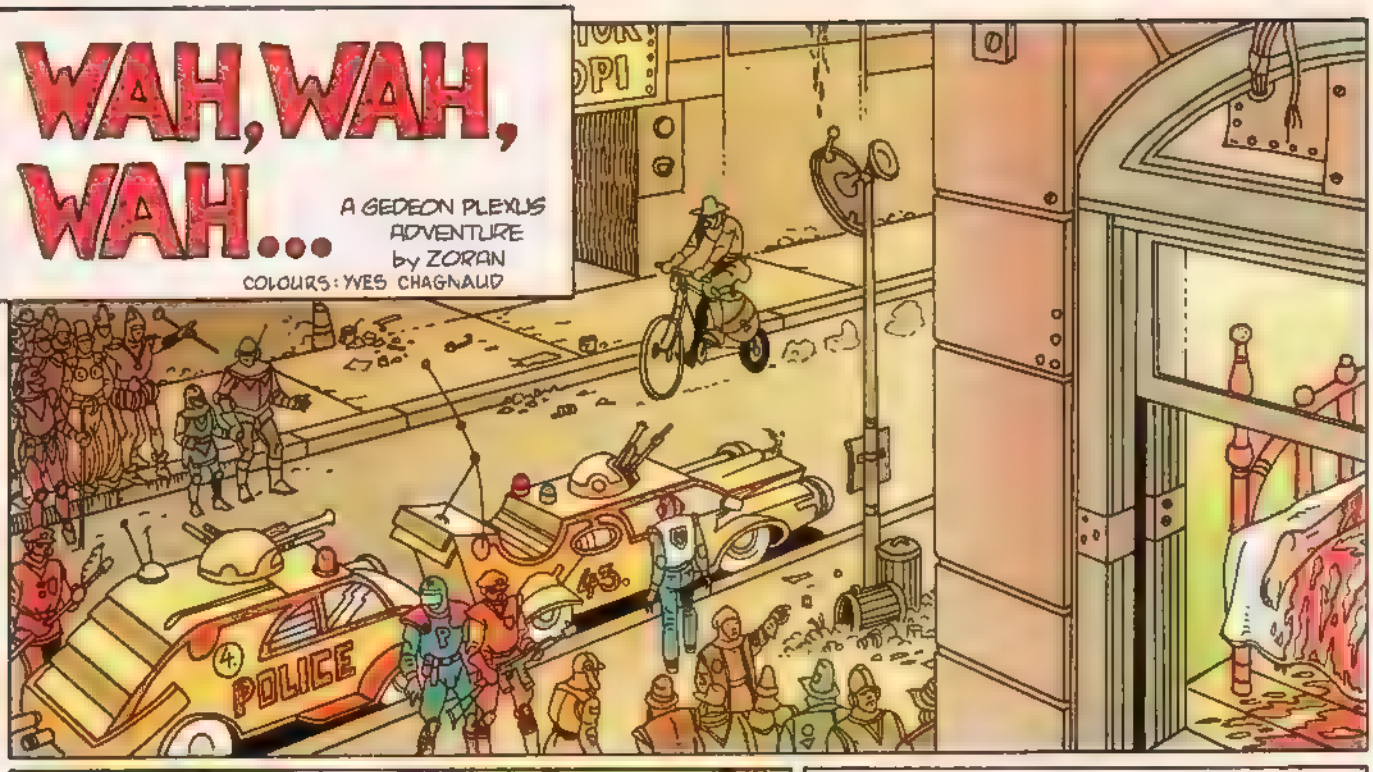

IN THE MORNING, WHEN SHE AWAKENS IN HER OWN BED, SHE WILL WELL REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED IN THE ENCHANTED WOOD...
...AND, THOUGH SHE WILL NOW BE THE FAIREST MAID IN ALL THE LAND AND COULD CHOOSE ANY MAN SHE WANTED, SHE WILL ESCHEW HUMAN COMPANY... AND GO TO DWELL IN THE DEEP FOREST...ALONE!
...FOR IT IS WHISPERED THAT ONE WHO HAS BEEN TOUCHED BY AN ELF-LORD WILL FOREVER AFTER BE DISAPPOINTED BY HUMAN LOVERS--AND WILL ALWAYS SEEK THE WILDFOLK!
"SOME ELVISH BLESSINGS CAN BE WORSE THAN A CURSE!"-- Old Country Saying --
THE MORROW WILL SEE THEM WELL ON THEIR WAY, FOR THEY HAVE FAR TO GO AND MANY DANGERS TO FACE. BUT FOR NOW, THEY SLEEP... THE GENTLE ELVEN HEALER, WHOSE TOUCH IS LIFE AND WHO IS LOVED BY ALL THAT LIVES...
...AND THE ELVEN HIGH LORD--WIELDER OF AWESOME SORCERIES AND HIGH MAGICKS-- WHOSE CARESS IS DESIRE, WHO FATE IS THE LIFE OR DEATH OF THE KINGDOM OF FAERIE!
AND THEY ARE GUARDED BY THE EVER-VIGILANT SWORD!

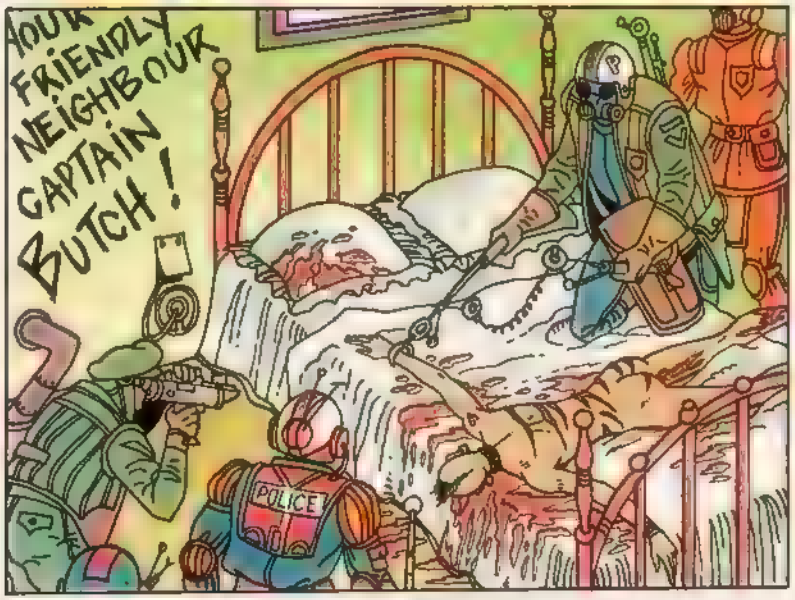
PROLOGUE

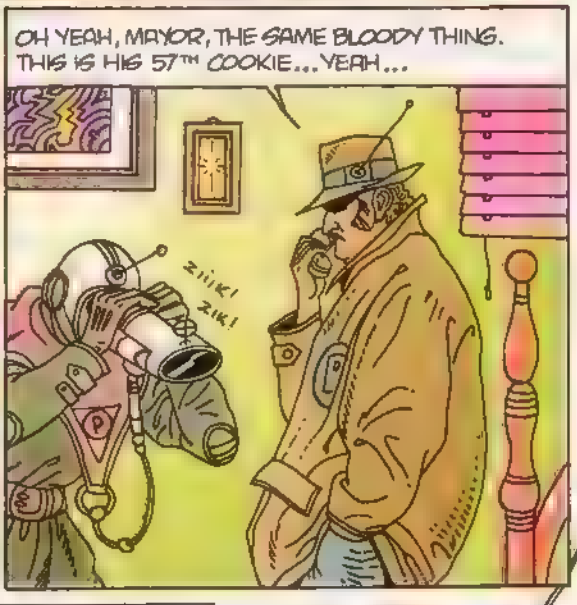
© 1985 Zoran Vanjaka

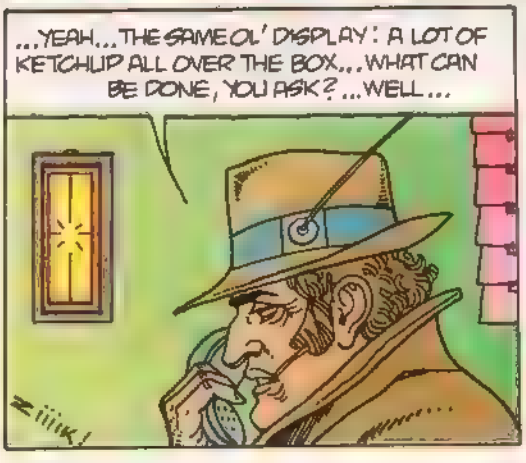
WAH, WAH, WAH...

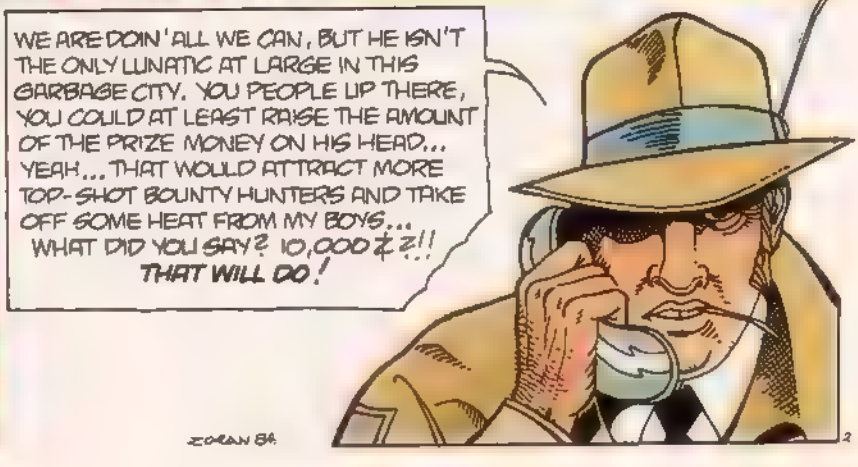
A GEDEON PLEXUS ADVENTURE
by ZORAN
COLOURS: YVES CHAGNAUD



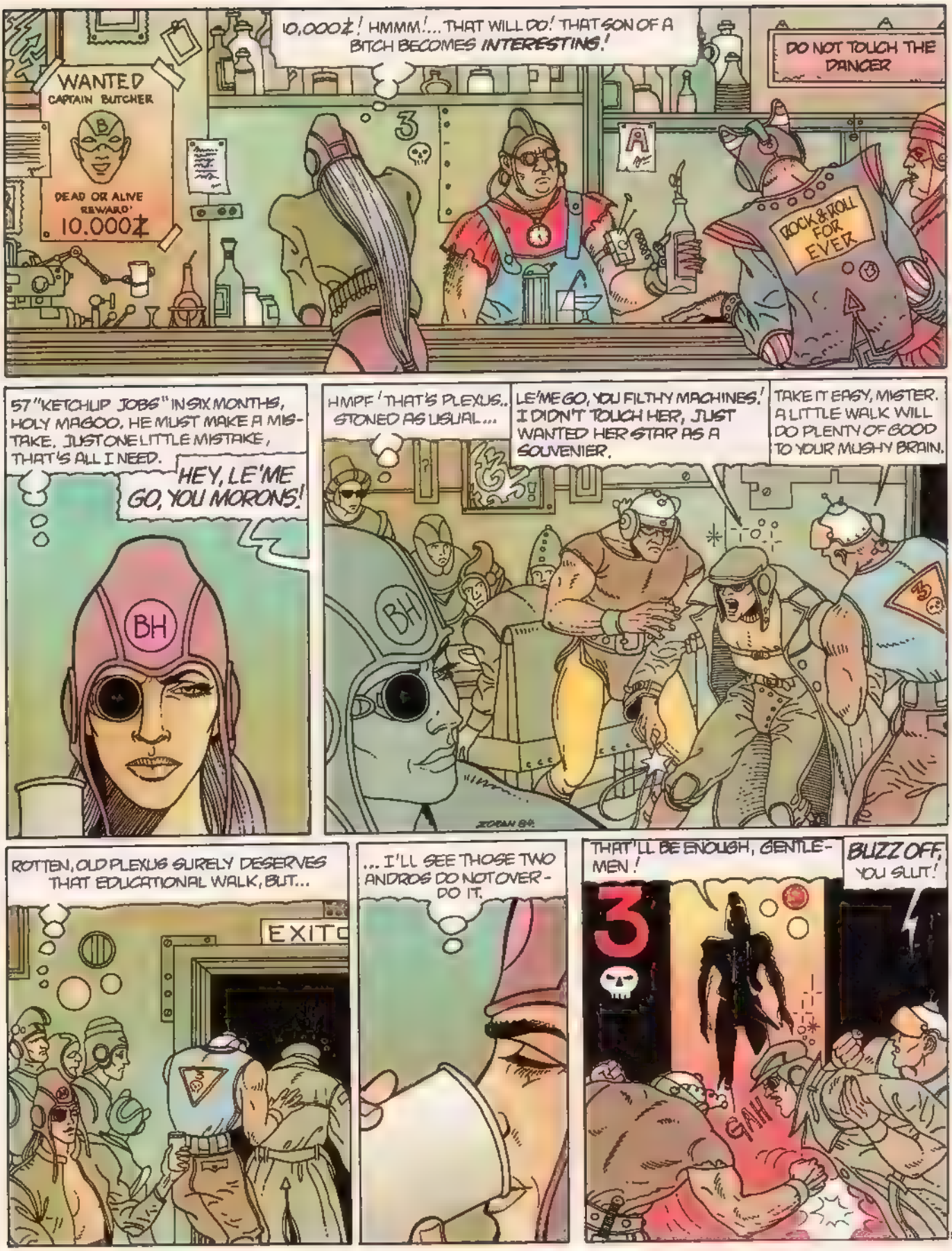




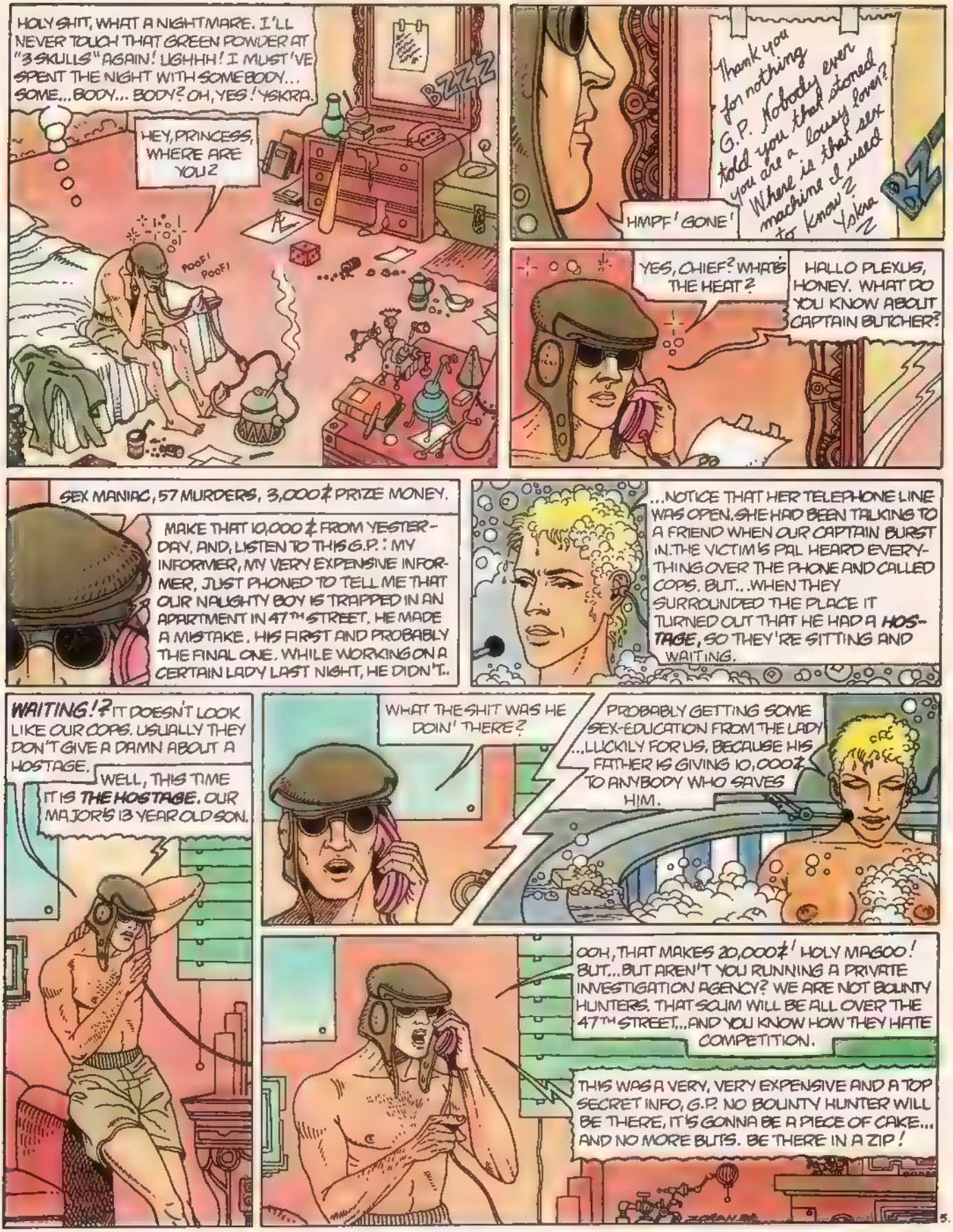


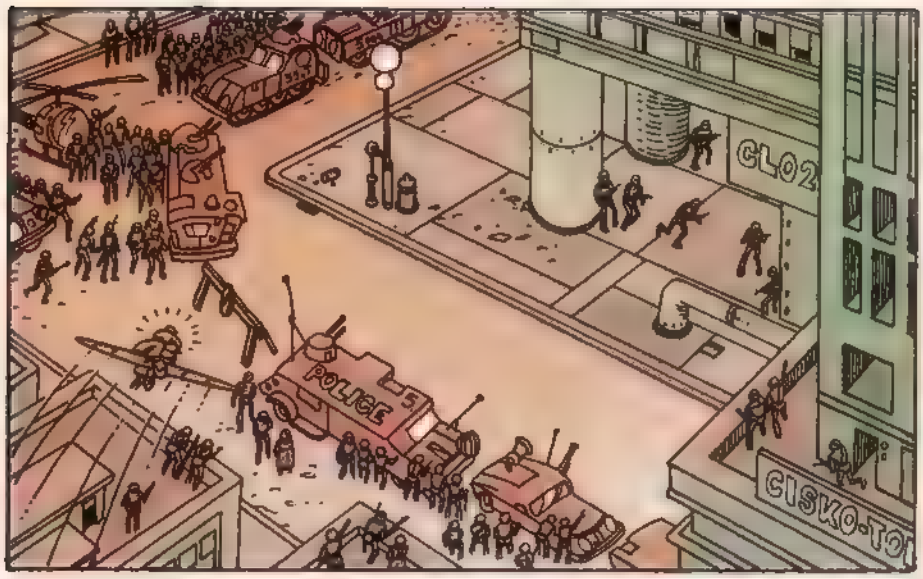

WE ARE DOIN' ALL WE CAN, BUT HE ISN'T THE ONLY LUNATIC AT LARGE IN THIS GARBAGE CITY. YOU PEOPLE UP THERE, YOU COULD AT LEAST RAISE THE AMOUNT OF THE PRIZE MONEY ON HIS HEAD... YEAH... THAT WOULD ATTRACT MORE TOP-SHOT BOUNTY HUNTERS AND TAKE OFF SOME HEAT FROM MY BOYS... WHAT DID YOU SAY? 10,000 ƵƵ!! THAT WILL DO!

ZORAN 84

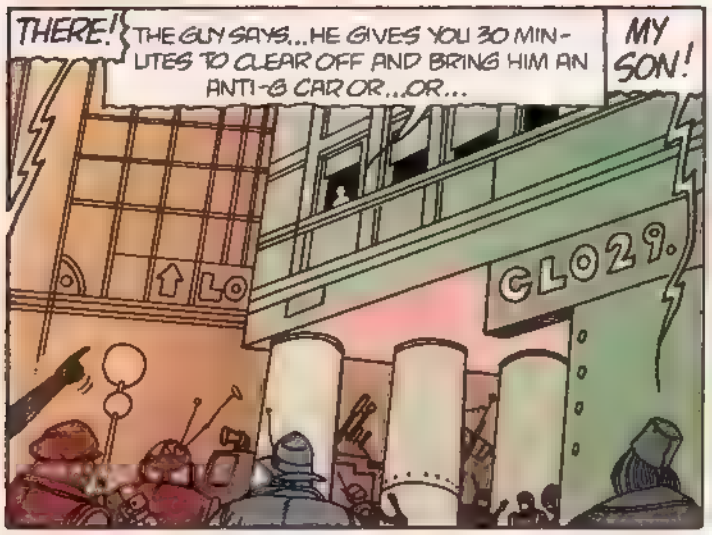

WANTED
CAPTAIN BUTCHER
DEAD OR ALIVE
REWARD
10.000Ł
10,000Ł! HMMM!... THAT WILL DO! THAT SON OF A BITCH BECOMES INTERESTING!
DO NOT TOUCH THE DANCER
ROCK & ROLL FOR EVER
57 "KETCHUP JOBS" IN SIX MONTHS, HOLY MAGOO. HE MUST MAKE A MISTAKE. JUST ONE LITTLE MISTAKE, THAT'S ALL I NEED.
HEY, LE'ME GO, YOU MORONS!
BH
HMPF! THAT'S PLEXUS.. STONED AS USUAL...
LE'ME GO, YOU FILTHY MACHINES! I DIDN'T TOUCH HER, JUST WANTED HER STAR AS A SOUVENIER.
TAKE IT EASY, MISTER. A LITTLE WALK WILL DO PLENTY OF GOOD TO YOUR MUSHY BRAIN.
ROTTEN, OLD PLEXUS SURELY DESERVES THAT EDUCATIONAL WALK, BUT...
EXIT
... I'LL SEE THOSE TWO ANDROS DO NOT OVER-DO IT.
THAT'LL BE ENOUGH, GENTLEMEN!
BUZZ OFF, YOU SLUT!
3
GAH

I DON'T LIKE ANDROS WHO MAKE PERSONAL REMARKS TOO SOON.
ZAP!
!?!
DROP YOUR GUN, FOXY LADY, OR THE BOZO HERE GETS IT.
HEE, HEE... WE ARE GONNA HAVE A BALL NOW, DUCHESS.
OH, NO, MY DEAR, IT'S YOU WHO'S GONNA HAVE...
...IT!
HAD ENOUGH, DARLING?
BITCH!
THANKS FOR COMING TO THIS SIDE OF THE HELL IN TIME, G P I OWE YOU ONE. THIS CALLS FOR A CELEBRATION. DON'T IT?
GREAT MAGOO, WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE AM I? WHO IS SHE...?
YOUR PLACE OR MY PLACE, LOVER?
...OH, YEAH... YSKRA ...YSKRA THE BOUNTY HUNTRESS. HOLY MAGOO HELP ME, IT'S GONNA BE A TOUGH NIGHT. PFFFT!


HOLY SHIT, WHAT A NIGHTMARE. I'LL NEVER TOUCH THAT GREEN POWDER AT "3 SKULLS" AGAIN! UGHHH! I MUST'VE SPENT THE NIGHT WITH SOMEBODY... SOME...BODY... BODY? OH, YES! YSKRA.
HEY, PRINCESS, WHERE ARE YOU?
BZZZZ
POOF! POOF!
Thank you for nothing G.P. Nobody ever told you that stoned you are a lousy lover? Where is that sex machine I used to know? Yska
BZ
HMPF! GONE!
YES, CHIEF? WHAT'S THE HEAT?
HALLO PLEXUS, HONEY. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CAPTAIN BUTCHER?
SEX MANIAC, 57 MURDERS, 3,000 ₺ PRIZE MONEY.
MAKE THAT 10,000 ₺ FROM YESTERDAY, AND, LISTEN TO THIS G.P.: MY INFORMER, MY VERY EXPENSIVE INFORMER, JUST PHONED TO TELL ME THAT OUR NAUGHTY BOY IS TRAPPED IN AN APARTMENT IN 47TH STREET. HE MADE A MISTAKE. HIS FIRST AND PROBABLY THE FINAL ONE. WHILE WORKING ON A CERTAIN LADY LAST NIGHT, HE DIDN'T..
...NOTICE THAT HER TELEPHONE LINE WAS OPEN. SHE HAD BEEN TALKING TO A FRIEND WHEN OUR CAPTAIN BURST IN. THE VICTIM'S PAL HEARD EVERYTHING OVER THE PHONE AND CALLED COPS. BUT... WHEN THEY SURROUNDED THE PLACE IT TURNED OUT THAT HE HAD A HOSTAGE, SO THEY'RE SITTING AND WAITING.
WAITING!? IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE OUR COPS. USUALLY THEY DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT A HOSTAGE.
WELL, THIS TIME IT IS THE HOSTAGE. OUR MAJOR'S 13 YEAR OLD SON.
WHAT THE SHIT WAS HE DOIN' THERE?
PROBABLY GETTING SOME SEX-EDUCATION FROM THE LADY ...LUCKILY FOR US, BECAUSE HIS FATHER IS GIVING 10,000 ₺ TO ANYBODY WHO SAVES HIM.
OOH, THAT MAKES 20,000 ₺! HOLY MAGOO! BUT... BUT AREN'T YOU RUNNING A PRIVATE INVESTIGATION AGENCY? WE ARE NOT BOUNTY HUNTERS. THAT SCUM WILL BE ALL OVER THE 47TH STREET... AND YOU KNOW HOW THEY HATE COMPETITION.
THIS WAS A VERY, VERY EXPENSIVE AND A TOP SECRET INFO, G.P. NO BOUNTY HUNTER WILL BE THERE, IT'S GONNA BE A PIECE OF CAKE... AND NO MORE BUTS. BE THERE IN A ZIP!


CLO2
POLICE
CISKO-TOI

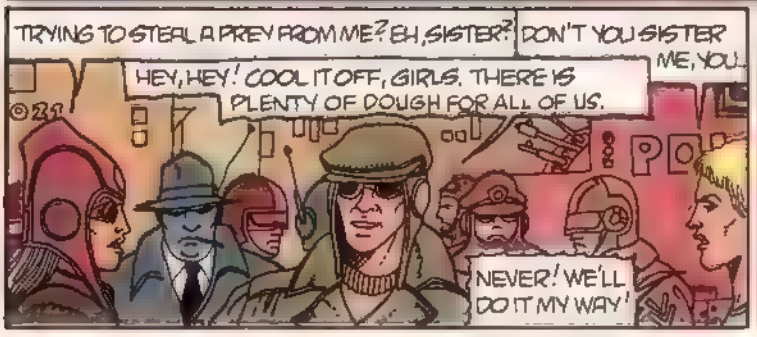
HERE I AM, CHIEF.
HEY!...THERE HE IS... THE HOSTAGE! HE'LL TALK.
TOPA 1


THERE!
THE GUY SAYS,..HE GIVES YOU 30 MINUTES TO CLEAR OFF AND BRING HIM AN ANTI-G CAR OR...OR...
MY SON!
CLO29.
LO

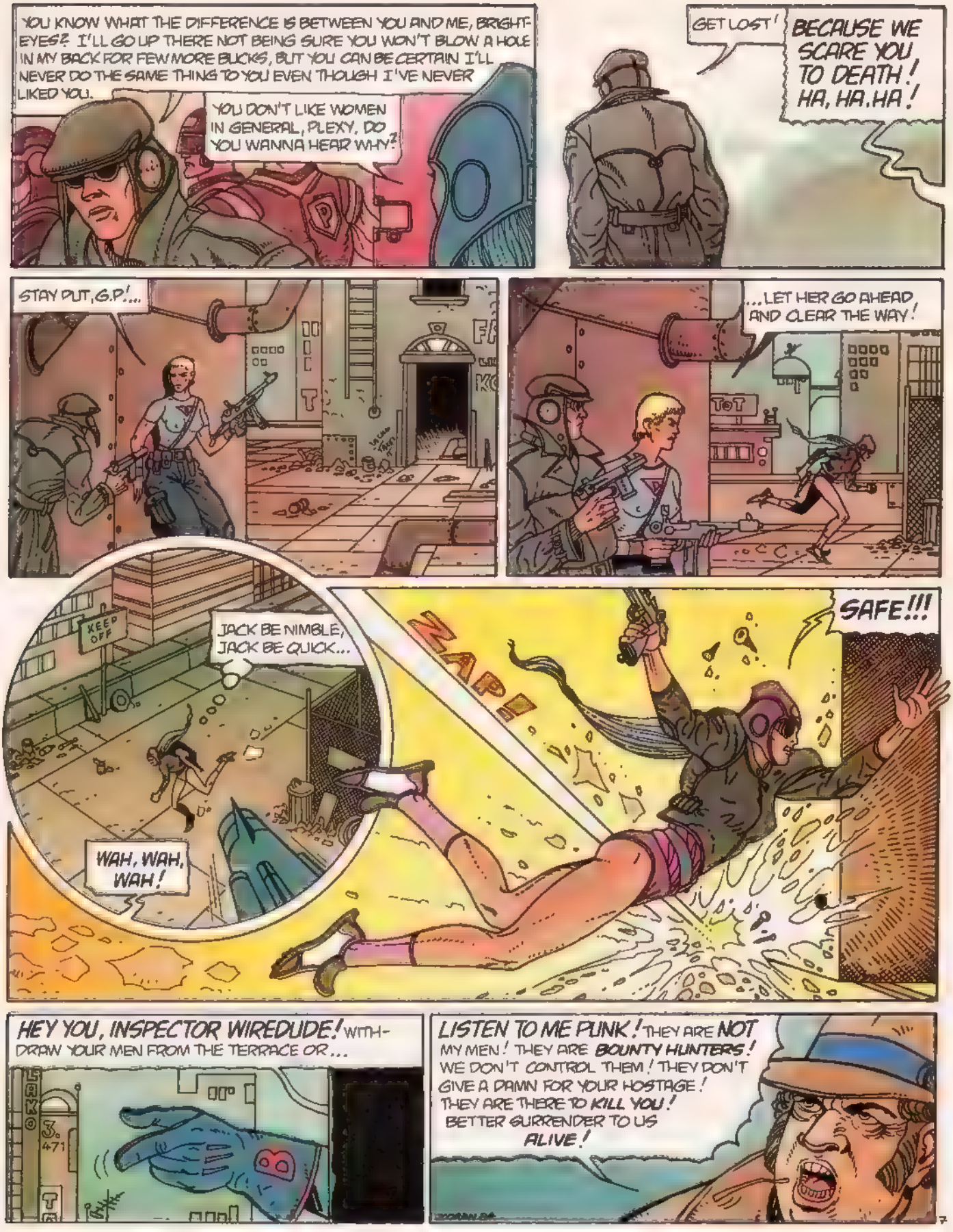
OUCH!

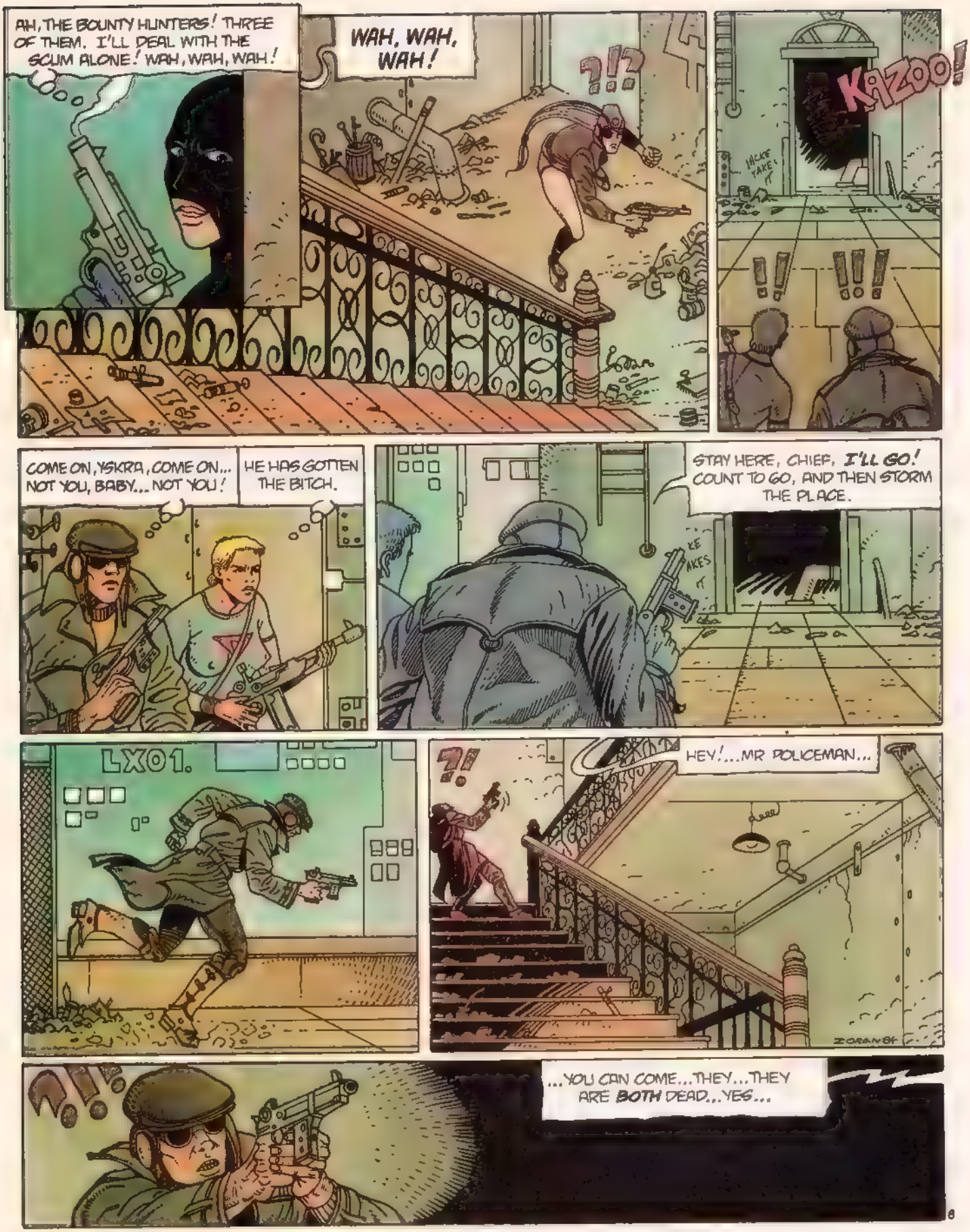
YOU HEARD THE KID, WIRE-HEADS! IN 30 MINUTES YOU WILL RECEIVE A PART OF HIS LITTLE UGLY BODY IF YOU DON'T MEET MY DEMANDS! WAH! WAH! WAH!
DADDY HELP ME!

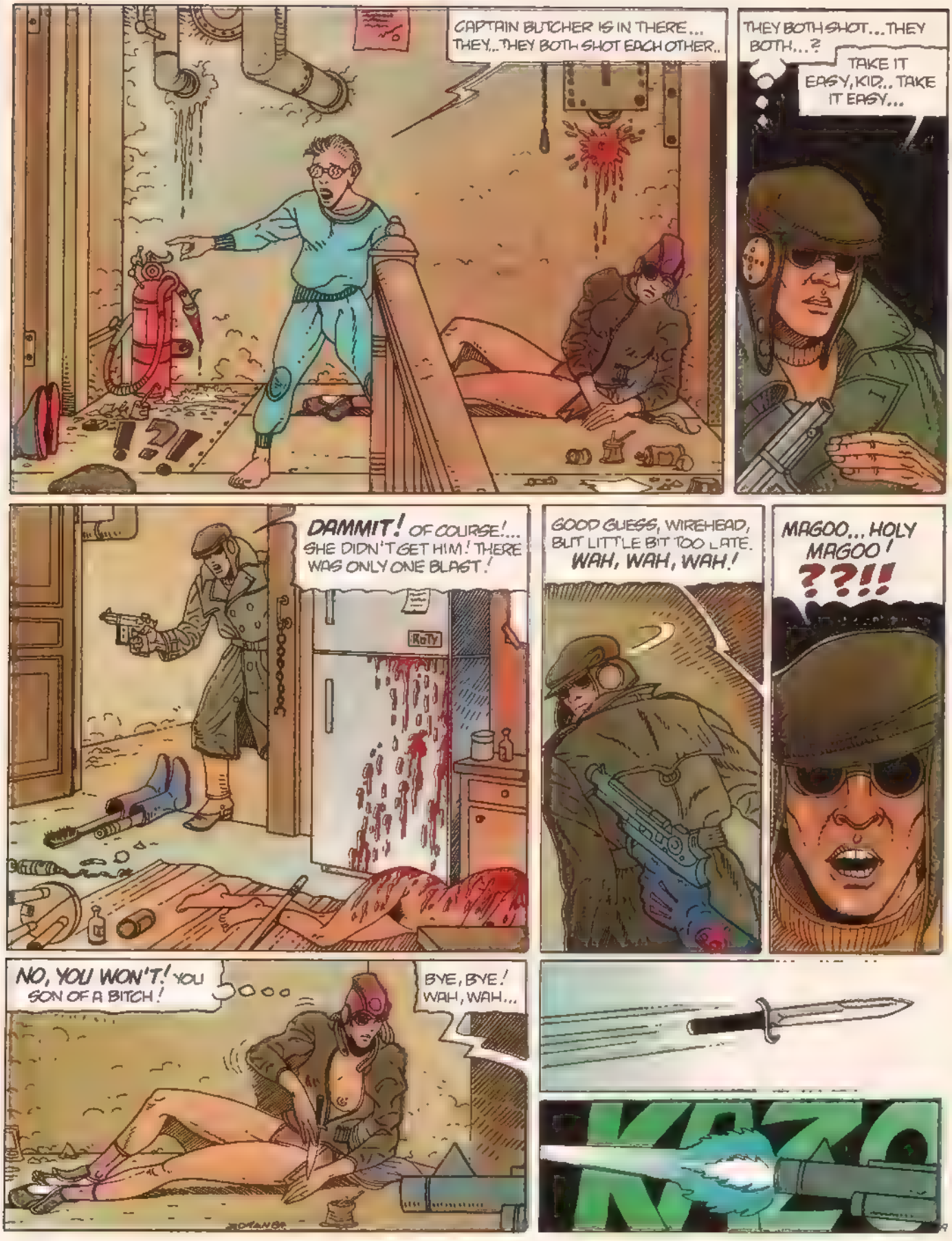
YOU DIRT! YOU BUTCHER! YOU... DO SOMETHING INSPECTOR! GIVE HIM THAT CAR!
O.K, MR MAYOR, O.K HE'LL GET THE CAR, BUT LET'S WAIT, WE STILL HAVE 30 MINUTES.
WHICH IS PLENTY OF TIME, AIN'T IT, G.P.?
LOOK WHO'S HERE. NO BOUNTY HUNTERS YOU SAID, CHIEF, HEE, HEE!
SHIT!
M


TRYING TO STEAL A PREY FROM ME? EH, SISTER?
DON'T YOU SISTER ME, YOU.
HEY, HEY! COOL IT OFF, GIRLS. THERE IS PLENTY OF DOUGH FOR ALL OF US.
NEVER! WE'LL DO IT MY WAY!

COME ON, PLEXUS!
GO, GO,..IT'S YOUR MASTER'S VOICE.


YOU KNOW WHAT THE DIFFERENCE IS BETWEEN YOU AND ME, BRIGHT-EYES? I'LL GO UP THERE NOT BEING SURE YOU WON'T BLOW A HOLE IN MY BACK FOR FEW MORE BUCKS, BUT YOU CAN BE CERTAIN I'LL NEVER DO THE SAME THING TO YOU EVEN THOUGH I'VE NEVER LIKED YOU.
YOU DON'T LIKE WOMEN IN GENERAL, PLEXY. DO YOU WANNA HEAR WHY?
GET LOST!
BECAUSE WE SCARE YOU TO DEATH! HA, HA, HA!
STAY PUT, G.P.!...
...LET HER GO AHEAD, AND CLEAR THE WAY!
KEEP OFF
JACK BE NIMBLE, JACK BE QUICK...
WAH, WAH, WAH!
ZAP!
SAFE!!!
HEY YOU, INSPECTOR WIREDUDE! WITH-DRAW YOUR MEN FROM THE TERRACE OR...
LISTEN TO ME PUNK! THEY ARE NOT MY MEN! THEY ARE BOUNTY HUNTERS! WE DON'T CONTROL THEM! THEY DON'T GIVE A DAMN FOR YOUR HOSTAGE! THEY ARE THERE TO KILL YOU! BETTER SURRENDER TO US ALIVE!


AH, THE BOUNTY HUNTERS! THREE OF THEM. I'LL DEAL WITH THE SCUM ALONE! WAH, WAH, WAH!
WAH, WAH, WAH!
?!?
KAZOO!
HE'S TAKE IT
!!
!!!
COME ON, YSKRA, COME ON... NOT YOU, BABY... NOT YOU!
HE HAS GOTTEN THE BITCH.
STAY HERE, CHIEF, I'LL GO! COUNT TO 60, AND THEN STORM THE PLACE.
LX01.
?!
HEY!...MR POLICEMAN...
...YOU CAN COME...THEY...THEY ARE BOTH DEAD...YES...


CAPTAIN BUTCHER IS IN THERE... THEY... THEY BOTH SHOT EACH OTHER..
!?!
THEY BOTH SHOT... THEY BOTH...?
TAKE IT EASY, KID... TAKE IT EASY...
DAMMIT! OF COURSE!... SHE DIDN'T GET HIM! THERE WAS ONLY ONE BLAST!
GOOD GUESS, WIREHEAD, BUT LITTLE BIT TOO LATE. WAH, WAH, WAH!
MAGOO... HOLY MAGOO!
??!!
NO, YOU WON'T! YOU SON OF A BITCH!
BYE, BYE! WAH, WAH...
KRAK

G.P.! G.P.! ARE YOU O.K.?!
G.P., ANSWER ME!!!
YOUR MASTER'S VOICE... HEH, HEH, HE...; KAH, KAHH!
BH
TALK TO ME, GEDEON! TALK TO ME! WHAT HAPPENED?
WHERE IS CAPTAIN BUTCHER? WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
I... I'VE...
... I'VE JUST REALIZED, CHIEF... I AM... I AM GETTING TOO OLD FOR THIS JOB... TOO OLD... TOO OLD...
e

BOOKVIEW

by Jo Duffy

Madeleine L'Engle's most recent novel, **A House Like a Lotus,** lies somewhere in a hazy no-man's-land between straight prose and fantasy. In many respects, it is a sequel to several of her other books, among them the glorious trilogy of **A Wrinkle in Time, A Wind in the Door,** and **A Swiftly Tilting Planet.** As many of you know, **A Wrinkle in Time** won a **Newbery Award** with its publication in 1962, and helped to shape the current face of both fantasy and science-fiction novels, and the field of children's and young adults' literature in general. Filled with lyrical and powerful imagery, with whimsy and with terrors, it has won millions of fans over the years. Now, it is the cornerstone of a beautiful trilogy, and one of the keystones of a strong and complex literary structure that links its own main characters, their friends, and their relations, to the lives and situations of characters in the many other adult and young adult novels that **L'Engle** has written over the years. To open any one of her books is to enter a universe, and **A House Like a Lotus** lies at the heart of that universe.

Certain characters from the Murry and O'Keefe families—the stars of the **Time** trilogy—appear here, as do members of the cast of the usually more down-to-earth Austin family books, so this story must take place sometime in the certain-scientific-advances-have-been-made-but-otherwise-the-world-is-still-much-as-we-know-it future where the others are set. However, except for one disease I've never heard of, and assume was created for the occasion, and a mention of the awarding of a Nobel Prize for an as-yet-unmade scientific discovery on which the conclusion of one of **L'Engle's** earlier novels hinged, the fantasy element is almost completely excluded.

But those interested in plot and characterization and complexity of structure could hardly do better than to read **A House Like a Lotus.** It is a book dealing with very basic human issues, sexuality and sexual identity, responsibility, the nature and consequences of hero worship, frailty, and forgiveness. While the approach taken to some of the subject matter is rather innocent, and touchingly tame compared to what many authors would produce, here it is moving and real, appropriate both to the story's sixteen-year-old heroine, and to the younger members of the book's audience.

L'Engle, as her books clearly show, is a writer of deep religious beliefs and convictions. At times, because of this, the situations that she creates, and the trials that her characters face, are stern to the point of harshness. However, this same strong faith is also what imbues **L'Engle's** protagonists with much of their vitality, their strength, and warmth, and tremendous capacity for beauty. This novel, in its wisdom and its innocence, was a joy to read.

However—while I don't wish to spoil any part of the book for those of you who haven't yet read it—there is one thing I'd like to take up with the author, and that is the matter of Zachary Grey, a recurring character of hers, who seems to have been placed in this story for no other reason than to appear to be behaving better than he usually does, only to make a dreadful fool of himself and be justly scorned for it by everyone around him. It's happened before, more than once, and now, whenever he comes on camera, no matter how things go initially, I know he's just winding up to give himself a pie in the face. Sometimes I suspect **L'Engle** of keeping him in a closet somewhere, just to pull out whenever she wants to make someone else look good by comparison. Please, can't he stay home, or do something good for once? Please? Give the guy a break. You write so beautifully of forgiveness and of growth, can't he please develop just one redeeming feature? Or be really liked by someone, instead of just admired for his looks and pitied for being a jerk? Or is that job going to be left up to us readers forever?

* * *

Still enthusiastically recommended in the not-quite-a-graphic-novel format are the **Modesty Blaise** collections being published by **Ken Pierce.** Not comic books as we know them—these are actually compilations of black-and-white British newspaper strips—they nonetheless contain complete, fast-moving, and very satisfying stories. Moreover, they are the work of a *novelist,* **Peter O'Donnell,** creator of the character, and author of the best-selling **Modesty Blaise** suspense novels.

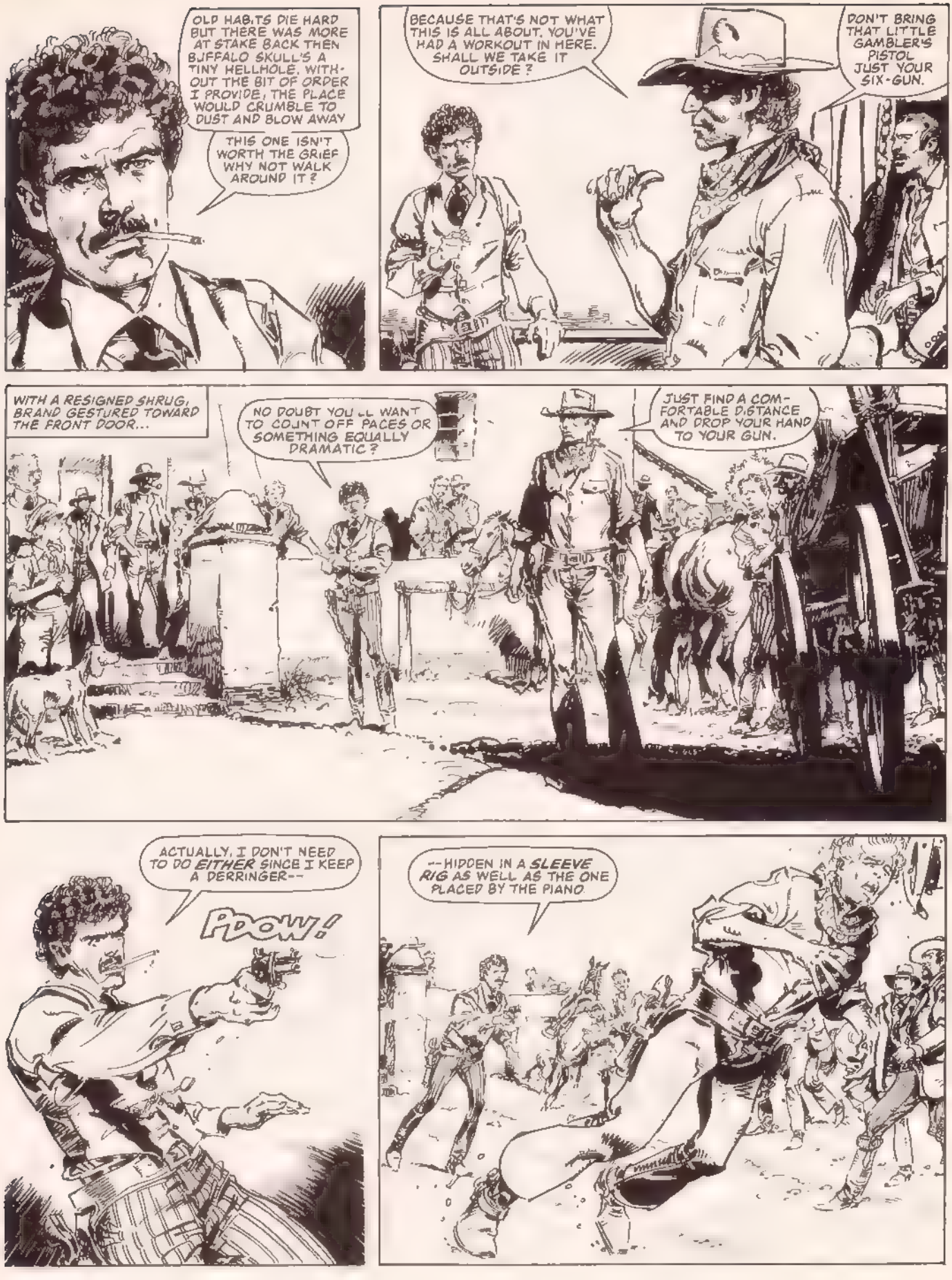
In the earlier volumes of this "first American edition" series, the illustrations were by the strip's first artist, the late **Jim Holdaway.** The more recent books are by current artist **Neville Colvin,** who is stylistically strikingly similar to **Holdaway**. (In the papers, between the tenures of these two, there were several other artists along the way. A British publisher has announced plans to collect these strips, and when this occurs, **Pierce** also plans to distribute those books.) One thing has remained consistent throughout, though, and that is the high level of enjoyment and fun this series provides.

Pierce also publishes collections of several other comic strips series. I am not familiar with any of these, but if any of you would like any further information, about any of the titles available, lists will be supplied to those who send stamped, self-addressed envelopes to:

Ken Pierce, Inc.
P.O. Box 332
Park Forest, IL 60466

BEYOND LEGEND (continued from page 42)

--AND THE MAN WHO MOLDED THEM IS NOW DANCING ON MY STRING! SEEING HIS FATE AFTER THE LAST CHARGE SHOULD BREAK THIS FOOLISHNESS!
THWIKK!
A MIRACLE. . .HE STILL LIVES!
HE'S SHOWN HE CAN SURVIVE THE TYRANT'S WORST! THIS TIME NOTHING THAT CARRION'S LOT DOES WILL MAKE US TURN BACK!

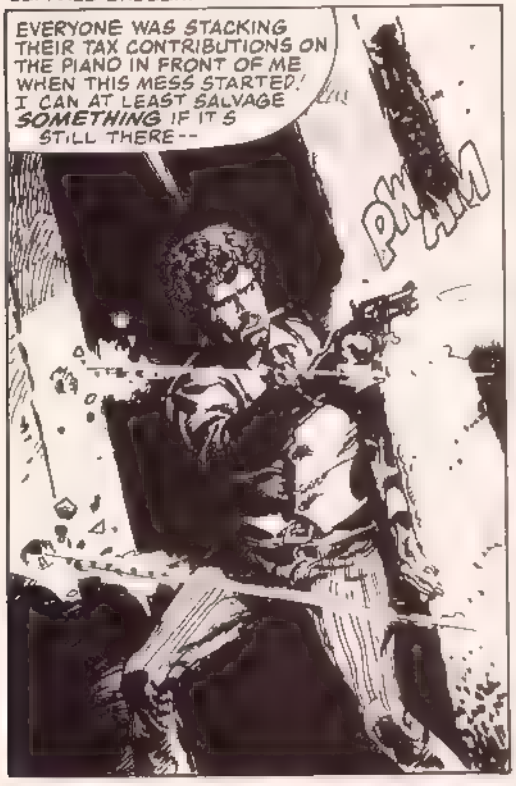

OLD HABITS DIE HARD BUT THERE WAS MORE AT STAKE BACK THEN BUFFALO SKULL'S A TINY HELLHOLE. WITHOUT THE BIT OF ORDER I PROVIDE, THE PLACE WOULD CRUMBLE TO DUST AND BLOW AWAY
THIS ONE ISN'T WORTH THE GRIEF WHY NOT WALK AROUND IT?
BECAUSE THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT. YOU'VE HAD A WORKOUT IN HERE. SHALL WE TAKE IT OUTSIDE?
DON'T BRING THAT LITTLE GAMBLER'S PISTOL JUST YOUR SIX-GUN.
WITH A RESIGNED SHRUG, BRAND GESTURED TOWARD THE FRONT DOOR...
NO DOUBT YOU'LL WANT TO COUNT OFF PACES OR SOMETHING EQUALLY DRAMATIC?
JUST FIND A COMFORTABLE DISTANCE AND DROP YOUR HAND TO YOUR GUN.
ACTUALLY, I DON'T NEED TO DO EITHER SINCE I KEEP A DERRINGER--
PDOW!
--HIDDEN IN A SLEEVE RIG AS WELL AS THE ONE PLACED BY THE PIANO

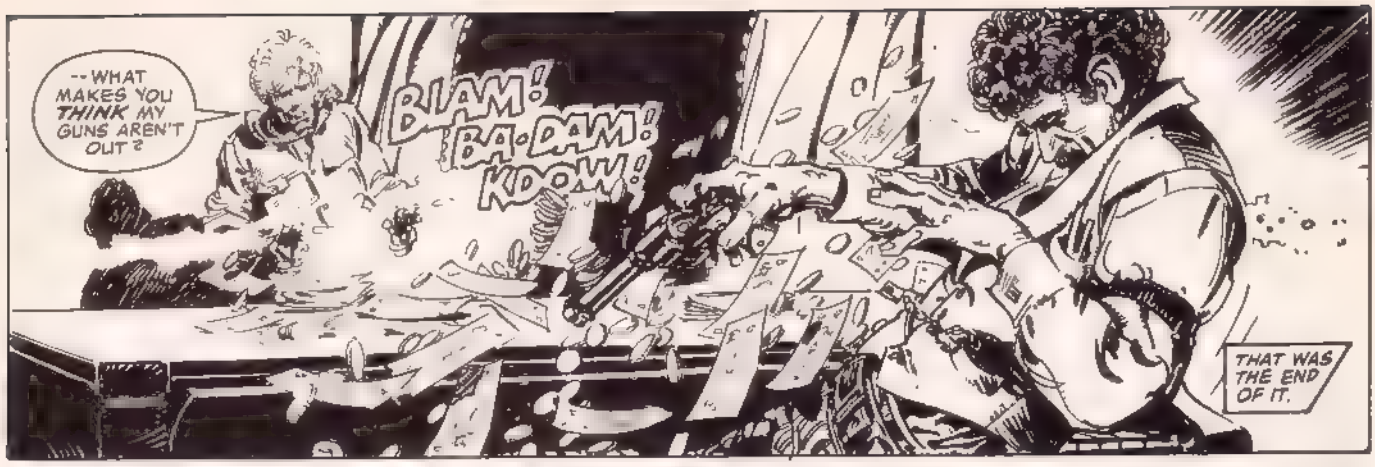
HE AIN T DEAD SHOT ONLY GRAZED 'IM
THE DISADVANTAGE OF USING A SHORT-BARRELED WEAPON AT MORE THAN POKER TABLE DISTANCE. HANG HIM THEN ... FROM THE STEEPLE
THAT'S IT. SINCE MY DEPUTIES HAVEN'T GOTTEN BACK YET, ANY VOLUNTEERS WILL DO.
PITCH IN, SHAW. I'LL FORGET YOU SHOULD BE SWINGING ALONGSIDE HIM.
PA. !
ROPE'S ALL SET. GIVE A HAND GETTIN' IT ON THAT HOMBRE'S NECK, SHAW.. BRAND WON'T LIKE IT IF WE LET 'IM ROLL OFF THE ROOF STEAD'A HANGIN'.
SHAW...? WHAT IN BLAZES YOU GAWKIN' AT?

DAMMIT, SHAW, HAVE YOU GONE DEAF?! MOVE OR I LL--
WUD!
WHY, YOU LOCO LITTLE--!
YOU'RE DEAD!
CHUK
DON'T WASTE TIME TIME STARING... IT CAN'T HELP THOSE TWO.
POW
IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU... START SHOOTING AT THAT STEEPLE!

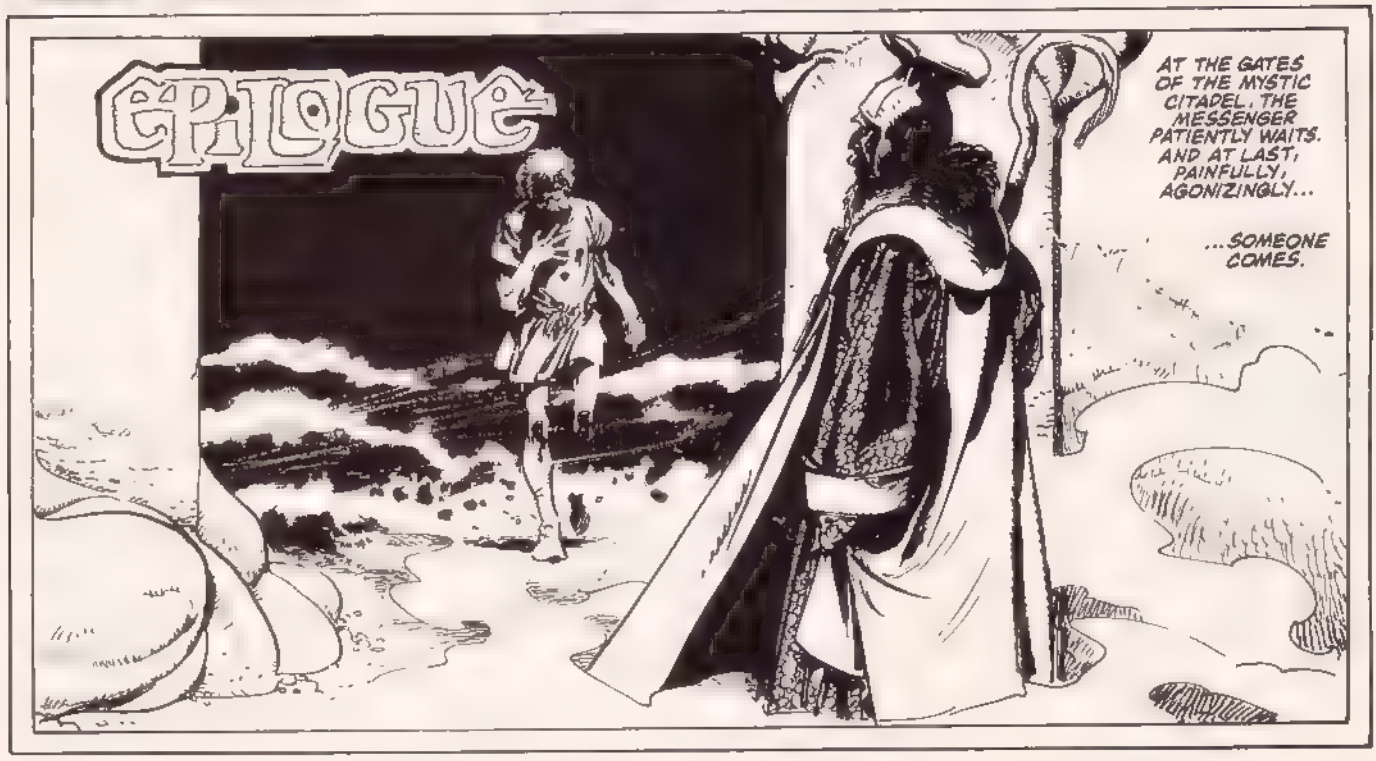
SOME DID. OTHERS DIDN'T
OTHERS WHO HAD SEEN BRAND AND HIS FOLLOWERS DEFIED AND DECIDED IT WASN'T AS SCARY AS THEY ONCE BELIEVED

OTHERS WHO FOUND THE NOTION WORTH FIGHTING FOR... UNTIL, SOONER THAN MOST REALIZED, A TURNING POINT HAD BEEN REACHED IN BUFFALO SKULL...


EVERYONE WAS STACKING THEIR TAX CONTRIBUTIONS ON THE PIANO IN FRONT OF ME WHEN THIS MESS STARTED! I CAN AT LEAST SALVAGE SOMETHING IF IT'S STILL THERE--
PWAM


--WHAT MAKES YOU THINK MY GUNS AREN'T OUT?
BLAM! BA-DAM! KDOW!
THAT WAS THE END OF IT.

HE RODE ON, NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN. IN TIME, THE PLACE ABANDONED THE NAME BUFFALO SKULL AND BECAME SOMETHING BETTER, PROSPERING AND LEADING THE TERRITORY INTO STATEHOOD.
BUT TO THIS DAY, THEY STILL TALK ABOUT THE GRIP BRAND HAD ON THE TOWN... AND THE STRANGER WILLING TO FIGHT TO THE DEATH TO BREAK IT ONCE AND FOR ALL.


EPILOGUE
AT THE GATES OF THE MYSTIC CITADEL, THE MESSENGER PATIENTLY WAITS. AND AT LAST, PAINFULLY, AGONIZINGLY...
...SOMEONE COMES.

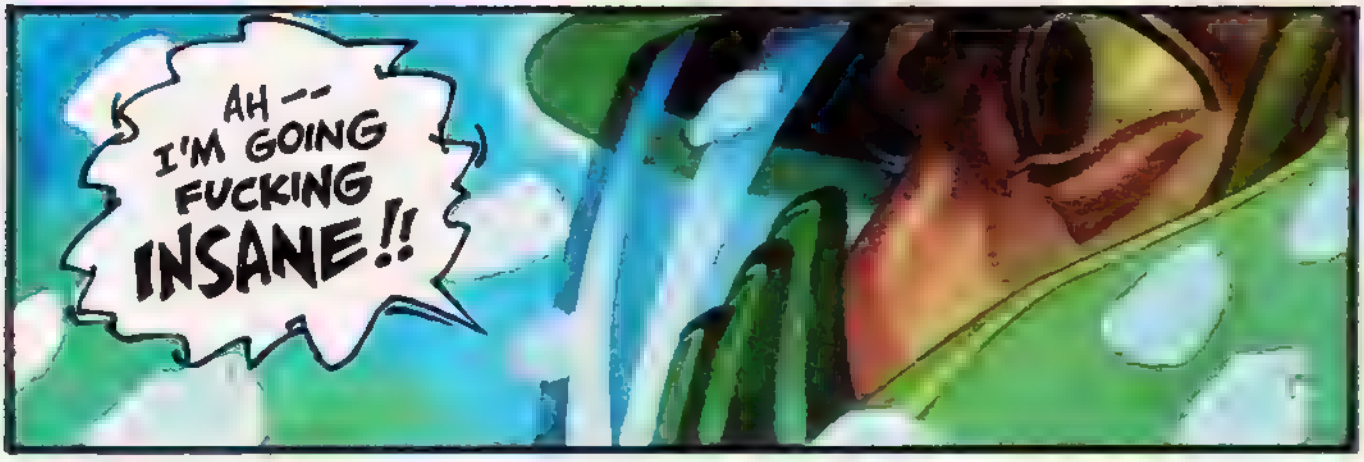
WARRIOR! LET ME HELP! WAS IT.. WAS IT WORSE THAN USUAL?
N-NO... PERHAPS NOT EVEN AS BAD...! IT'S ME..I'M WEAKENING...! MY COURAGE IS GOING...
NO MORE... AFTER THIS..! NO . MORE . !
THAT IS YOUR PAIN, YOUR WEARINESS SPEAKING. WITH REST, YOU WILL FEEL BETTER. YOU WILL REMEMBER THE GREAT PURPOSE YOU SERVE.
WITHOUT LEGENDS, WITHOUT HEROES, ALL HOPE AND INSPIRATION DIE. THERE MUST ALWAYS BE NEW LEGENDS, NEW HEROES, TO INSPIRE NEW HOPE--
--AND HOW CAN YOU MEASURE A HERO EXCEPT BY THE STRENGTH OF THE VILLAIN HE OPPOSES.
REST, MY FRIEND. REST.
SOON, IN A PLACE BEYOND TIME, BEYOND LEGEND, A WARRIOR SLEEPS A HEALING SLEEP, WAITING...
...UNTIL HE IS CALLED TO SERVE AGAIN

A R I S E A W A K E

YEAR 20

ON A MOUNTAINSIDE ON A MOON OF JUPITER, DAVID WILKINS IS TESTING A PROTOTYPE SPACESUIT FOR THE SPACE ADMINISTRATION.

IT'S BEEN TWENTY YEARS SINCE THEY LEFT HIM HERE. THE ISOLATION HASN'T BEEN GOOD FOR HIM.



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IMMOBILIZED IN A DRIFT OF CARBON DIOXIDE SNOW, DAVID WILKINS THINKS OF HIS HOME IN CHICAGO -- AND HIS WIFE.

THERE'S BEEN A CHANGE IN ADMINISTRATION AT **NASA** -- I'M UNDER ORDERS TO BRING YOU HOME!
LET'S GO. OUR SHIP IS JUST BEYOND THE HILL.
I -- I'M...
EMILY IS WAITING FOR YOU!
HERE WE ARE!
I-- I'M SO HAPPY, I...

CLIMB ABOARD, PAL!
NO! NO!
MY GOD-- I'M HALLUCINATING! I'M GOING NUTS!
DAVID...
EMILY!!

LET'S GO, DAVID. IT'S COLD.
WHA-- WHAT?
WELCOME HOME, MY LOVE.
DADDY!

EMILY... STEVEN...
I... I...
EMILY--THIS IS ALL SO WONDERFUL! I--I CAN'T...
I LOVE YOU, DAVID.

EMILY--I...
EM--NO!
NO!!
THIS IS IT! I'VE CRACKED! I'M TOTALLY GONE!
BUT THEN-- WHY FIGHT IT?

"I LOVE YOU, DAVID."
"PLEASE DON'T GO 'WAY, DADDY."
"NEVER AGAIN."

TOADSWART

SYNOPSIS

"What is this Darkness, this consummate Evil pervading all . . . the now-forsaken castle chambers . . . the landscapes and villages beyond?" So in the year 982 A.D., from a lonely cell, contemplates the dwarf Toadswart, retainer of Castle Amplestone.

Had it commenced with the mysterious disappearance of the castle's old Lord? Certainly this affected his heir and regent, Price Waxwroth. Suspecting the King of the First Dominion of treacherous designs upon Amplestone province, Waxwroth evoked Dark Forces to give life to a hideous creation . . . the Golem.

Then, the King's army suddenly arrived, proof to Waxwroth that someone within Amplestone had betrayed him. Not long after, Rupert, Waxwroth's youngest son — whose coming investiture would also validate the Prince as reigning Lord of Amplestone — went plunging to his doom from the castle's clock tower.

Believing Lacknose, the old Lord's astrologer, to be the spy within Amplestone and responsible for all that had gone so recently and terribly wrong, Waxwroth ordered the aged magician's arrest. He also dispatched a small party of men with the Golem to wreak vengeful havoc upon the King's siege camp. But Lacknose died under the Prince's tortures admitting nothing . . . and the Golem's mission ended in curious disaster.

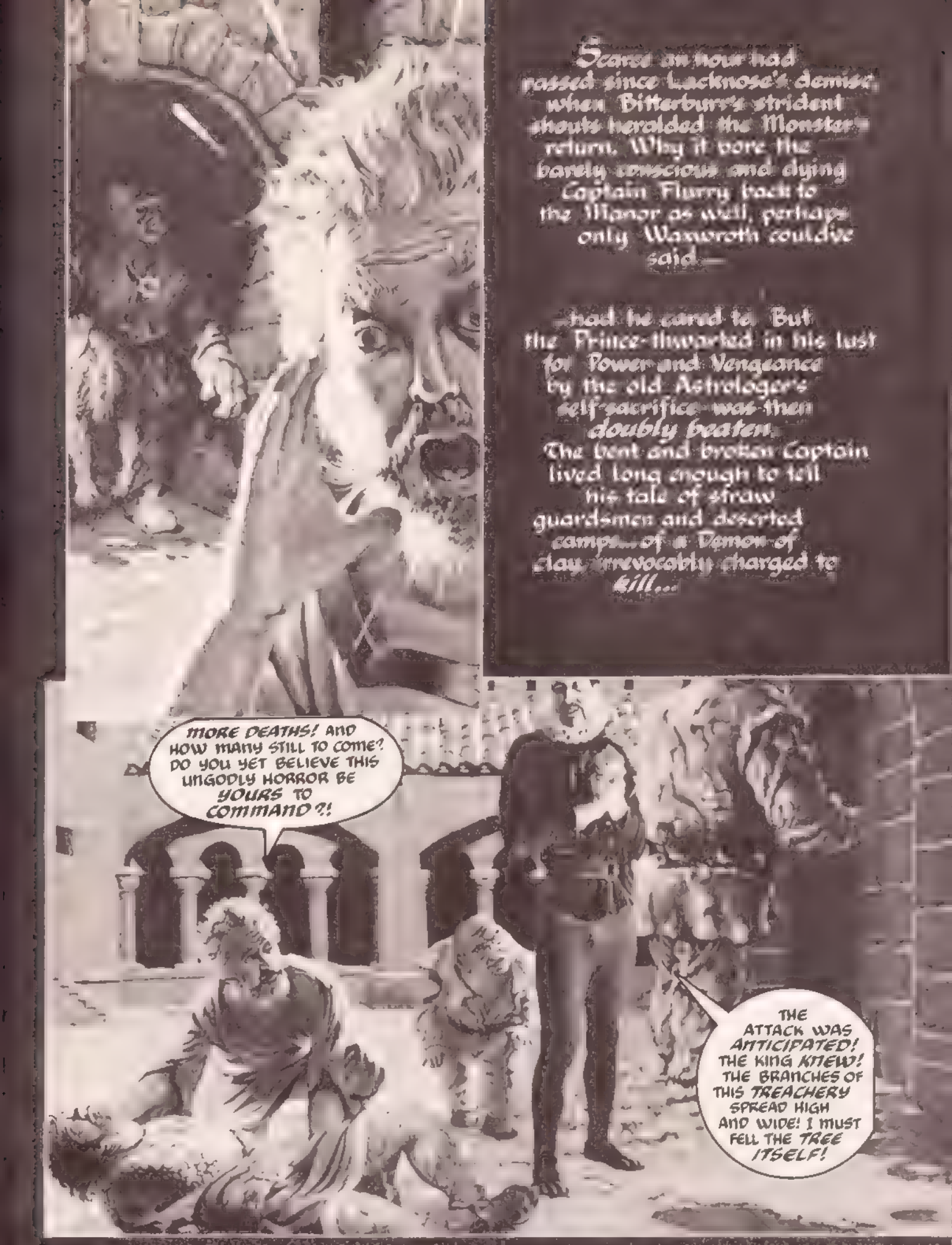
d'AMPLESTONE

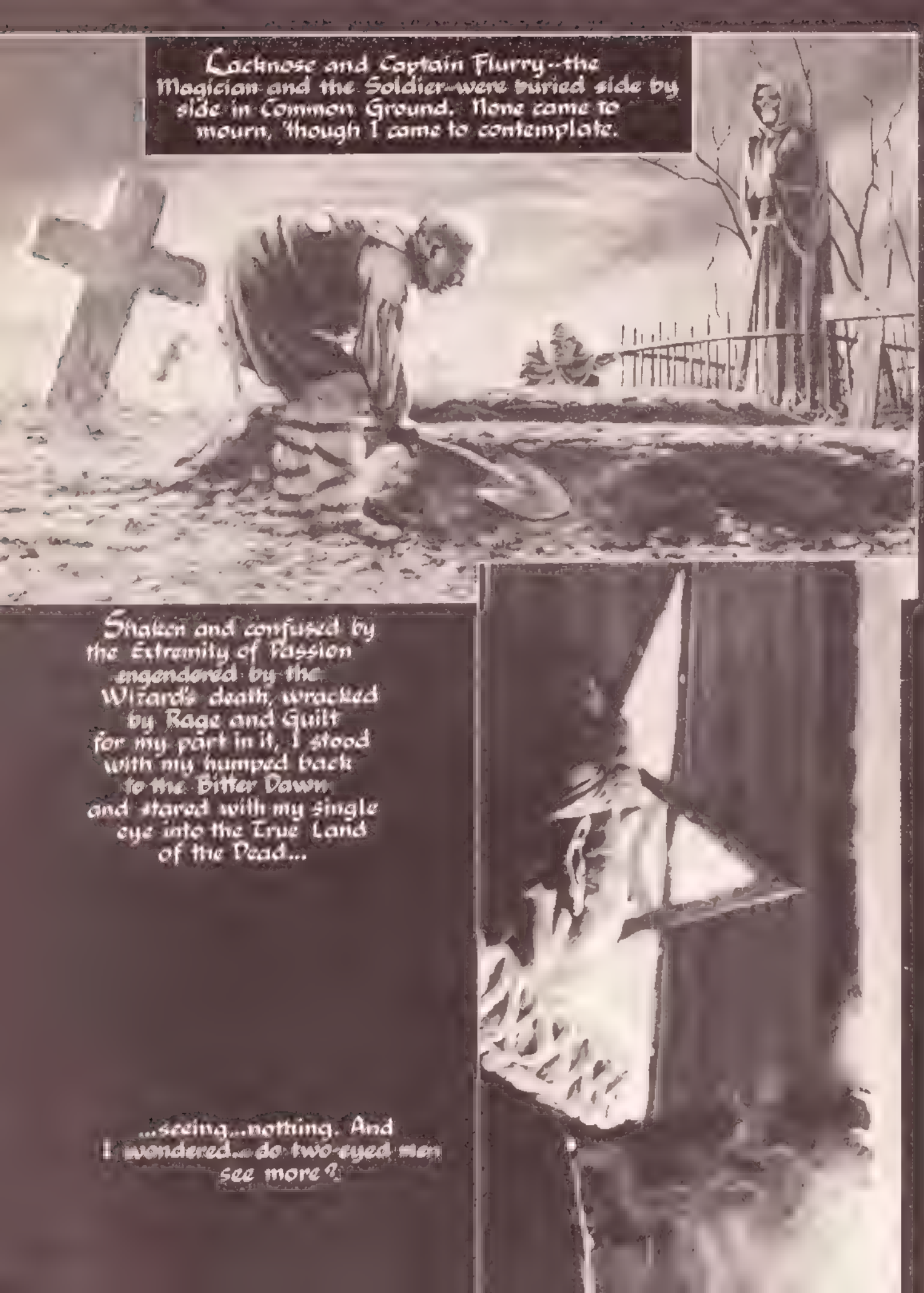
A GOTHIC TALE of HORROR & MAGICK

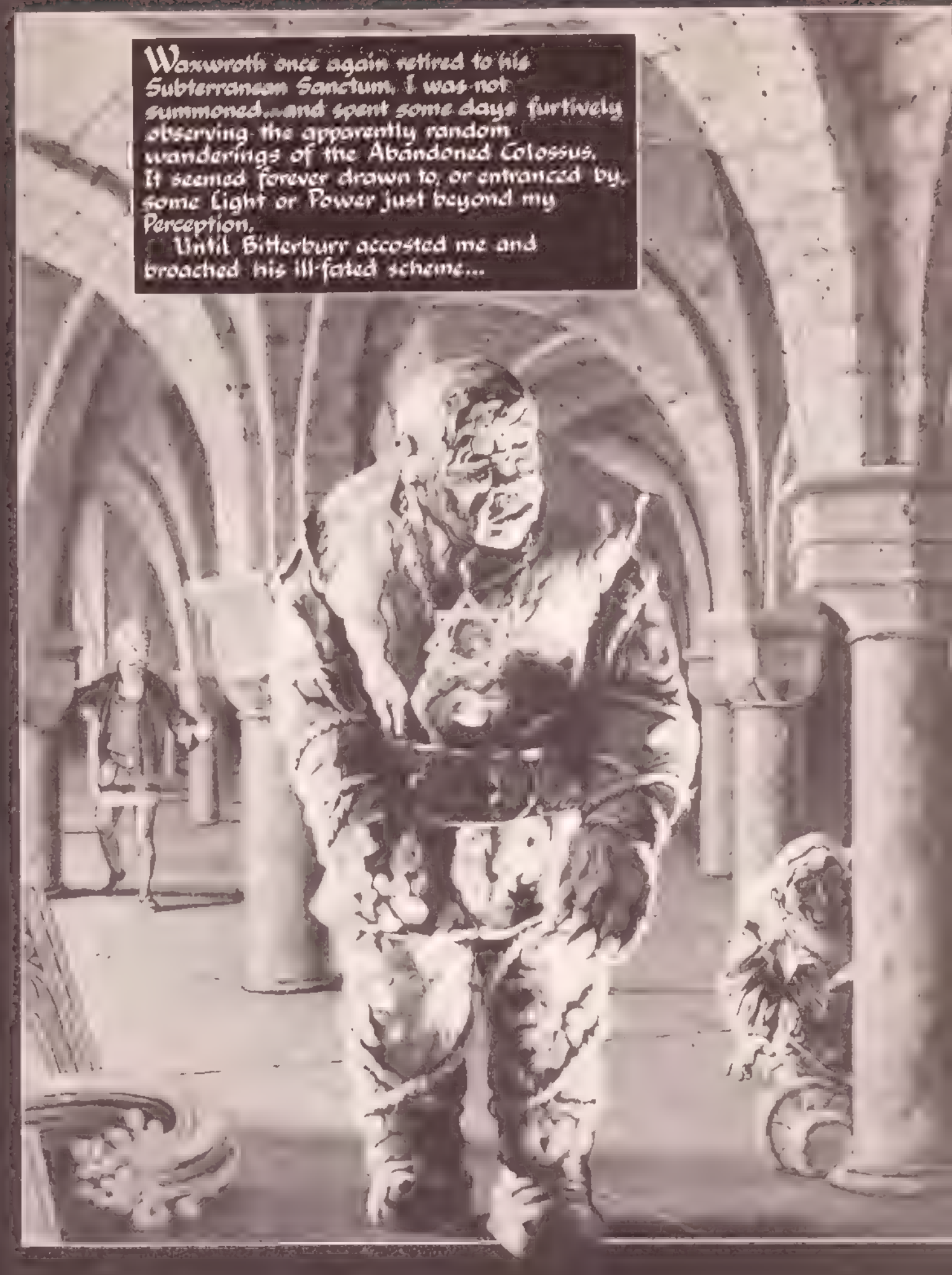
BY TIM A CONRAD

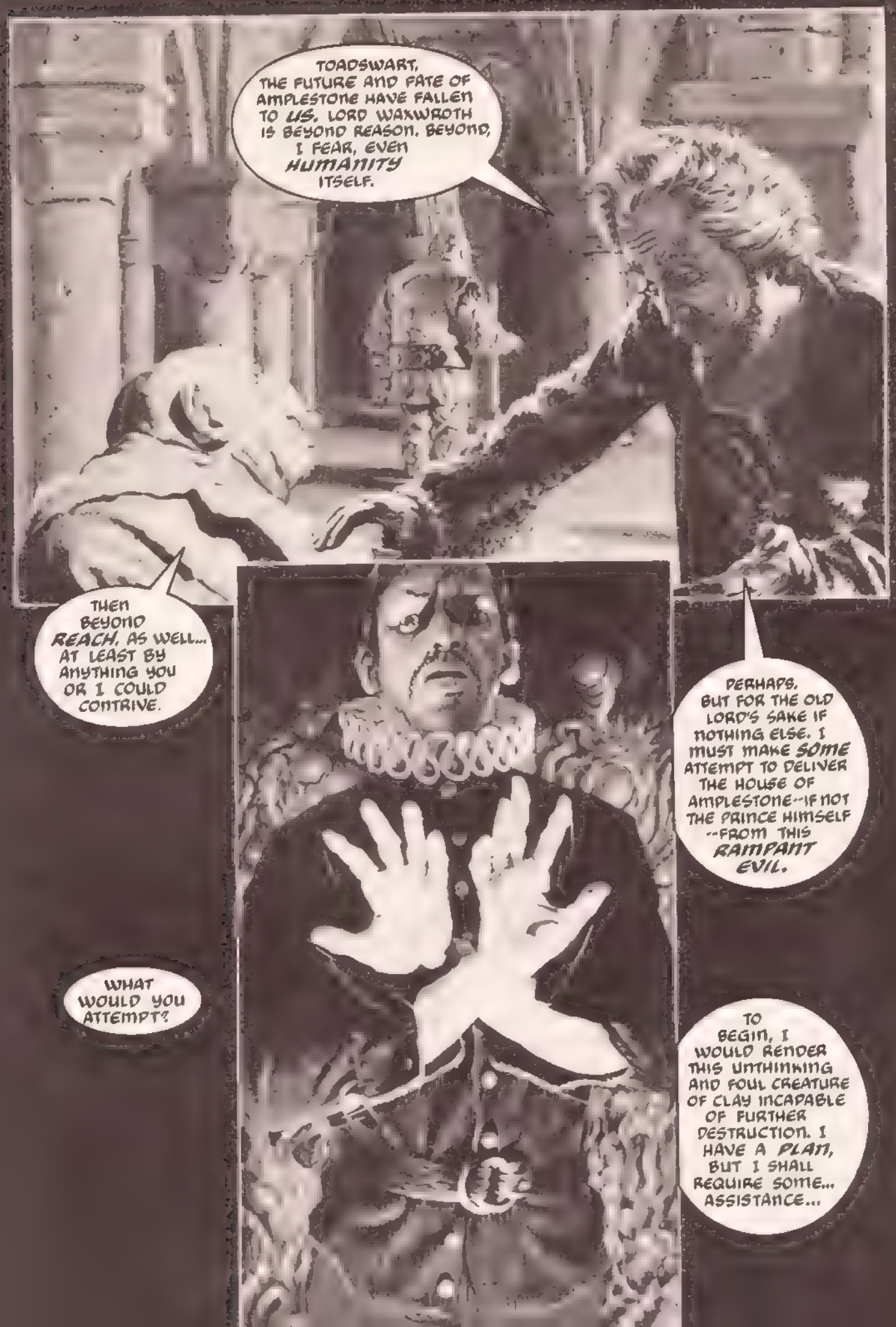
© 1985 Tim Conrad

ABYSS
In the days following the Tragically Unsuccessful Raid on the King's siege-camp, Waxwroth's Golem shambled and shuffled aimlessly and unattended through the empty corridors of a desolate Amplestone.


Scarce an hour had passed since Lacknose's demise, when Bitterburr's strident shouts heralded the Monster's return. Why it bore the barely conscious and dying Captain Flurry back to the Manor as well, perhaps only Waxwroth could've said —
—had he cared to. But the Prince-thwarted in his lust for Power and Vengeance by the old Astrologer's self-sacrifice- was then doubly beaten.
The bent and broken Captain lived long enough to tell his tale of straw guardsmen and deserted camps... of a Demon of clay irrevocably charged to kill...
MORE DEATHS! AND HOW MANY STILL TO COME? DO YOU YET BELIEVE THIS UNGODLY HORROR BE YOURS TO COMMAND?!
THE ATTACK WAS ANTICIPATED! THE KING KNEW! THE BRANCHES OF THIS TREACHERY SPREAD HIGH AND WIDE! I MUST FELL THE TREE ITSELF!


Lacknose and Captain Flurry--the Magician and the Soldier--were buried side by side in Common Ground. None came to mourn, though I came to contemplate.
Shaken and confused by the Extremity of Passion engendered by the Wizard's death, wracked by Rage and Guilt for my part in it, I stood with my humped back to the Bitter Dawn and stared with my single eye into the True Land of the Dead...
...seeing...nothing. And I wondered... do two-eyed men see more?


Waxwroth once again retired to his Subterranean Sanctum. I was not summoned...and spent some days furtively observing the apparently random wanderings of the Abandoned Colossus. It seemed forever drawn to, or entranced by, some Light or Power just beyond my Perception.
Until Bitterburr accosted me and broached his ill-fated scheme...


TOADSWART, THE FUTURE AND FATE OF AMPLESTONE HAVE FALLEN TO *US*. LORD WAXWROTH IS BEYOND REASON. BEYOND, I FEAR, EVEN *HUMANITY* ITSELF.
THEN BEYOND *REACH*, AS WELL... AT LEAST BY ANYTHING YOU OR I COULD CONTRIVE.
PERHAPS. BUT FOR THE OLD LORD'S SAKE IF NOTHING ELSE, I MUST MAKE *SOME* ATTEMPT TO DELIVER THE HOUSE OF AMPLESTONE--IF NOT THE PRINCE HIMSELF --FROM THIS *RAMPANT EVIL*.
WHAT WOULD YOU ATTEMPT?
TO BEGIN, I WOULD RENDER THIS UNTHINKING AND FOUL CREATURE OF CLAY INCAPABLE OF FURTHER DESTRUCTION. I HAVE A *PLAN*, BUT I SHALL REQUIRE SOME... ASSISTANCE...

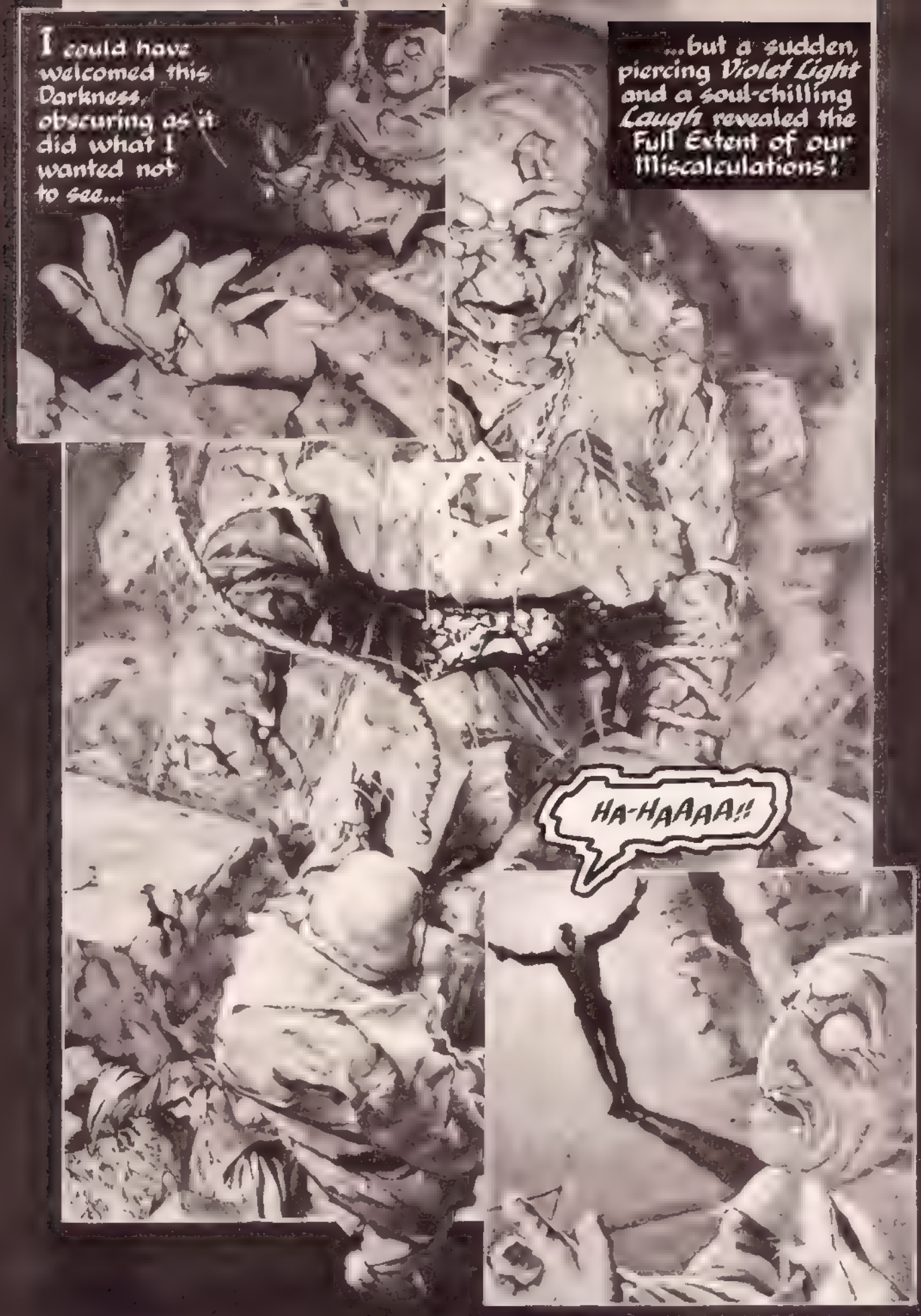
For three days and most of two nights, the Counselor and I sweated and struggled—with ropes and pulleys, timbers and stone—to prepare our Ambush. Bitterburr, bolstered by Activity and Purpose, grew increasingly Confident.
THE TRIGGER BRACES ARE DELICATELY BALANCED AND THE RIGGING IS ADJUSTED FOR TENSION. FROM YON SILL YOU'LL BE OUT OF HARM'S WAY, AND WILL HAVE NO TROUBLE SETTING THE FULL AND CRUSHING WEIGHT OF MASONRY UPON THE MONSTER.
IF YOU CAN ENTICE IT TO STEP THROUGH THIS DOORWAY... AND REMAIN THERE LONG ENOUGH FOR YOU TO REACH SAFETY.
But Fatigue and Uncertainty reduced me to Doubt and Despair. Would even three long tons of stone stop this Horror? And was Waxwroth even then conjuring some Still Greater Horror?

Bitterburr and I had attributed the Golem's Distracted State to Waxwroth's Diverted Attention. Since the Abortive Foray, the Black Prince had been absorbed, we assumed, with some new esoteric Strategy for Power and Vengeance.

The Success of our Scheme depended on the Forsaken and Undirected Monstrosity allowing itself to be led into the trap. I took up my position on the sill and waited—worried and skeptical as Bitterburr went to test our Assumptions...

...which proved Valid...

...until Blackness descended like a Curtain of Death!
NOW, TOADSWART! DO IT N--
In Desperation and Panic, I threw myself into the Gloom...
...where an arm-wrenching jolt and a mind-numbing Rumble and Roar assured me that our Trap at least was sprung!


I could have welcomed this Darkness, obscuring as it did what I wanted not to see...
...but a sudden, piercing Violet Light and a soul-chilling Laugh revealed the Full Extent of our Miscalculations!
HA-HAAAA!!

TRAITORS AND FOOLS! ALL SHALL DIE WHO OPPOSE ME!
I HAVE LOOSED A PALL OF PLAGUE AND SICKNESS THAT NONE SHALL ESCAPE!
And I was cast into this squalid forgotten cell... to wonder what Providence directed and entwined the Fates of myself and the Mad Prince of Amplestone.
NEXT: WAXWROTH FURIOSO

FEEDBACK

letters & comments

Dear Stan and Archie,

Let me start off this letter with the usual words of praise for **Epic Illustrated** (salami, salami, baloney). As a regular purchaser of both your high-falutin' comic book and **Heavy Metal,** I appreciate **Epic's** devotion to traditional (if somewhat conservative) storytelling, as well as **HM's** more adventurous approaches to graphic media. Lest you think I'm badrapping you, there's a lot to be said for the simple art of telling a story.

But I ramble.

My single favorite piece in **Epic #29** was **Little Otis's Five-Cent Ride.** Reminiscent of the best **Twilight Zone** episodes and **Ray Bradbury's Green Town Tales,** it was a charming tale of the wonderful world of childhood dreams. Ah, to have a whole afternoon at the movies on a dollar again.

Cobalt 60 and **The Last Galactus Story** are proceeding along very nicely, thank you. Regarding the latter, I'm one of those who believe our favorite Purple Planet Eater belongs here—especially since the story being told is not your typical cosmic Epic (i.e., two balloon-muscled morons heaving planets at each other). As for **Cobalt 60, Mark Bodé** has his dad's quirky sense of humor—in other words, I liked the reference to **Astounding Stories** 1936 as a "holy book." And speaking of the humorous, Dr. Watchstop's latest adventure was a real trip. He makes my day.

Anything **Rick Veitch** does is okay by me, so you can scope out my opinion of **Ghosts in the Machine.** As for the cover story, **A Matter of Vengeance** was a competently executed piece, but it was hardly an earthshaking story. And **Rider** was, simply, awesome. **Jonn Zack's** work has a distinctly Boschian flavor to it.

And now a few words on **Denny O'Neil's Mediaview**—namely, when are you guys gonna kick his ass out? His pedantic, pathetic reviews have been the one sore point of this magazine. Granted, the current column isn't all that sorry, but his failure to review **Return of the Jedi** (a.k.a. The Loot Will Be With You) a while back, not to mention his callous dismissal of **Romancing the Stone** (a much better movie than the latest Indy Jones debacle), and his R-E-T-A-R-D-E-D review of **Buckaroo Banzai** are just a few of the things he's hacked out over the years which have managed to piss me off. If **O'Neil** had at least some vestige of wits (or wit), I could tolerate his glaucoma-ridden review.

I hate to end a letter on such a downbeat note, but life is not always kind.

Mitchell B. Craig
Lancaster, SC

We have some good news and some bad news, *Mitchell*...depending on one's point of view, that is. We have no plans to kick ol' Denny's ass out in the immediate future. See, we may not always share his opinion of the films he writes about, but we're delighted to have a columnist with such a strong and individual point of view. It's more important to us that his work evokes a strong response from his audience than that response always be positive. However, another person you'll also be seeing a lot more from, a person who is to your taste, is *Rick Veitch*. The first issue of his new Epic Comics limited series—*The One,* which takes a really interesting slant on the super hero from —should be in the comics shops just about any day now.

Dear Stan and Archie,

You might not print this in your column, so if you have an answer please write it to me. In **The Last Galactus Story** you said, not in exact words, that there wasn't humanoid life on Earth (**Epic #28** and **29**). If Nova, Galactus' fifth herald is reasonably immortal wouldn't it stand to reason that Galactus' first herald, the Silver Surfer, should surely be alive? Could it be that he's still alive on Earth or, by some great power, he was killed on earth, or was he able to, finally, breach the field around earth, that Galactus made to keep him in. And if he escaped is he alive or dead, and how and where to all of the five questions.

Please answer.

If, by some means, you have made a mistake, is there a possibility that I can get a "No-Award"?

Chip Brown
Providence, RI

Sure, *Chip*....If there are non-prizes not to be given, then we think you definitely haven't earned one for not pointing out that the simple fact that we haven't shown the Silver Surfer doesn't mean that we haven't thought of him. (On the other hand, if you really can decipher what we just think we wrote, there may be a rest home stay—or an editorial job—somewhere in your future. That, plus ninety days in jail and a small bribe should settle the entire matter.) However, you might watch the pages of the regular *Marvel* line of comics from some great announcements about the Silver Surfer's more immediate future.

Dear Stan and Archie,

I have been meaning to write a letter to **Epic Illustrated** since the first issue some four and a half years ago but now finally. I have long admired the fact that, unlike **Heavy Metal,** your stories actually have plots which makes sense. Unlike the somewhat borderline soft porn which some accuse **HM** of being which I do not agree with at all. I feel we have got a right to read whatever we want to read anywhere we want to read it at. And for the record, I did not find **Void Indigo** at all offensive whatsoever. I enjoyed it for a piece of adult fiction, no worse than an R movie on cable which any five year old can watch if they have a VCR.

Kent Williams' piece made me think of **Jeffrey Jones** in the use of soft focus and the usage of panel breakdown. I feel **Mr. Williams** can be as good as **Mr. Jones** in a few short days at the rate he is going. The story stood as a good piece of dream like fiction which has become very popular in the last few years of prose fantasy which works best in illusionary form (comics, movies, etc.)

The Last Galactus Story I will hold judgement on until the last installment has come out. But one question—in the **Hercules** mini-series, it was shown that Nova can become human enough to enjoy Hercules' presence and that event occurred hundreds of years in our future. So, if she could then how come she cannot do so now? What about the Silver Surfer? Did he also lose his immortality as well as his space time powers? Where is he at the time of the story? Is Galactus the last being from our time to be still alive at that point in time?

Rider by **Jonn Zack** was a powerful

(continues on page 98)

Preview

TIME OF THE DRAGON

Fantasy is perhaps one of the most difficult of genres to successfully bring to life in fiction. With magic and sorcery as principal ingredients the touch of reality needed to make a story work for the reader becomes exceedingly fragile. When fantasy is done in graphic story format, the problem becomes doubly difficult. Not only must story and characters work totally convincingly in the writing, but pictorial reality must be authoritatively established or the piece will still fail to come to life. In their new Limited Series, *The Black Dragon*, done for Marvel's *Epic Comics* line, writer Chris Claremont and artist John Bolton take on the problem once again as they have previously in their earlier fantasy *Marada the She-Wolf* which has made three very successful appearances here in *Epic Illustrated*. As in that earlier series, *The Black Dragon* employs historical reality as a foundation for its fantasy.

THE BLACK DRAGON™ & © 1985 Christopher Claremont & John Bolton

It is the year 1193 AD when *The Black Dragon* begins, in the England of Richard the Lionhearted, and the exiled Lord James Dunreith is returning to the land of his birth, a land now threatened by the shadow of rebellion and sorcery. James is enlisted by his former enemy, Eleanor of Aquitaine, to use his own talent for wizardry—a talent he personally doubts—to root out and combat the threat of evil which could soon take form and engulf the land they both love. Honor binds him to do so, though it means he must betray the man he regards as his best friend, Edmund DeValere.

Through the setting and human conflict, Chris Claremont's story establishes the air of realism in *The Black Dragon*. And John Bolton's classical art approach immediately renders it with beautiful validity. He then extends this feeling of correctness into the fantasy elements Claremont's script gradually brings on stage. From sorceress Morgan LeFay to demons summoned by Edmund DeValere, Bolton is able to evoke the fantastic with the same loving conviction that he brings to both period detail and storytelling dramatics. And with these latter elements so right, all of the former becomes even more powerfully believable.

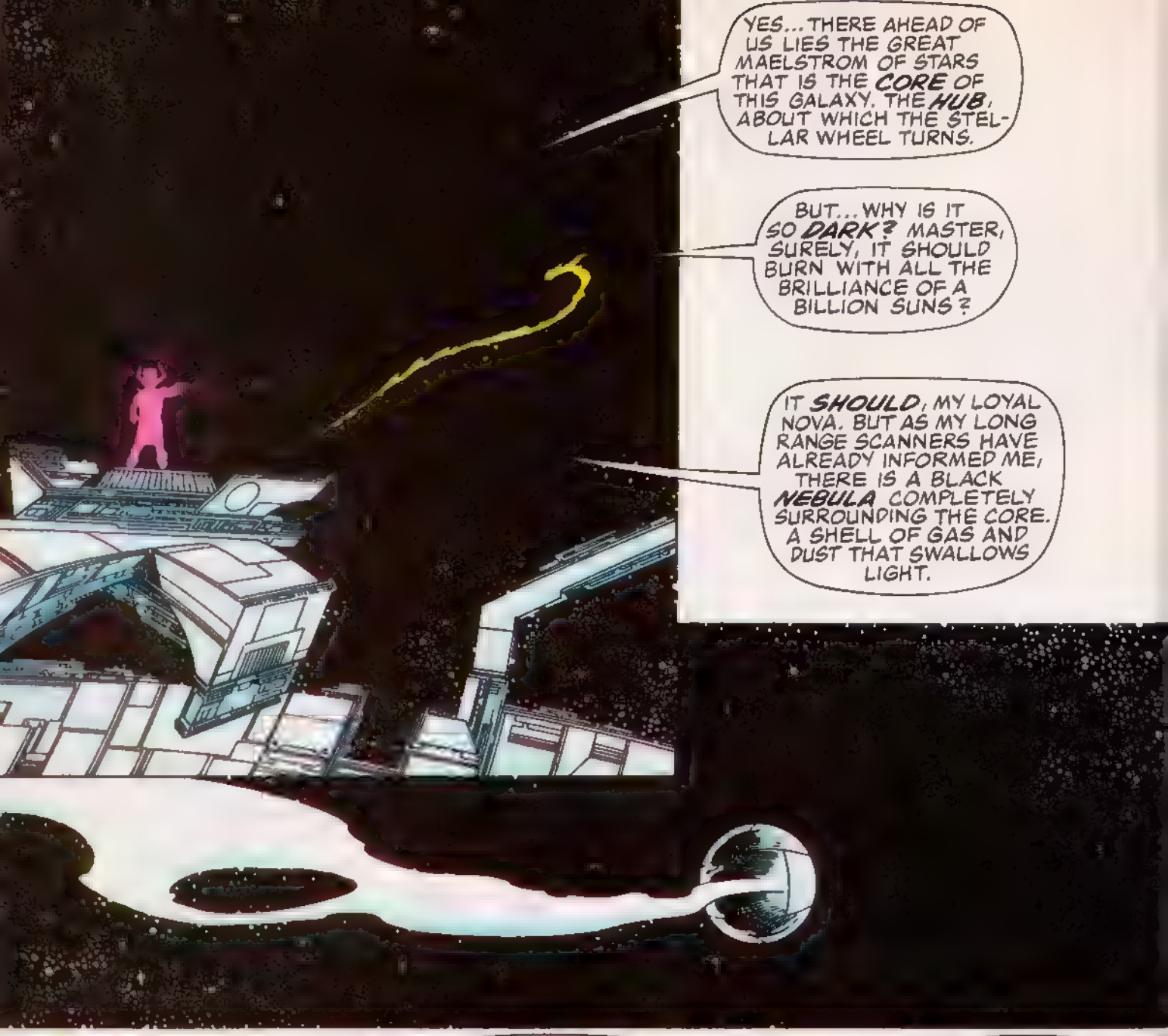
Ultimately, the conflict that is chronicled in the six issues making up the *Black Dragon* Limited Series encompasses many characters—including the Robin Hood of history and legend—and two totally different but co-existing realms: medieval England and the magic realm of Faery. James Dunreith, the tale's protagonist, besides being divided in his loyalties, is torn between the two realms. Along with being a fantasy epic, *The Black Dragon* is also a journey of self-discovery for its hero and an examination of a world in transition between mysticism and the emergence of Christianity. It is a deeply textured and intricate work deserving of the one hundred eighty page length allowed by the six issue format. Published monthly, this full color series is at its halfway point. But all issues are available at any comics specialty store. The time of the *Black Dragon* is upon us. If you're intrigued by these black and white samples of its artistry, we recommend that you seek it out.

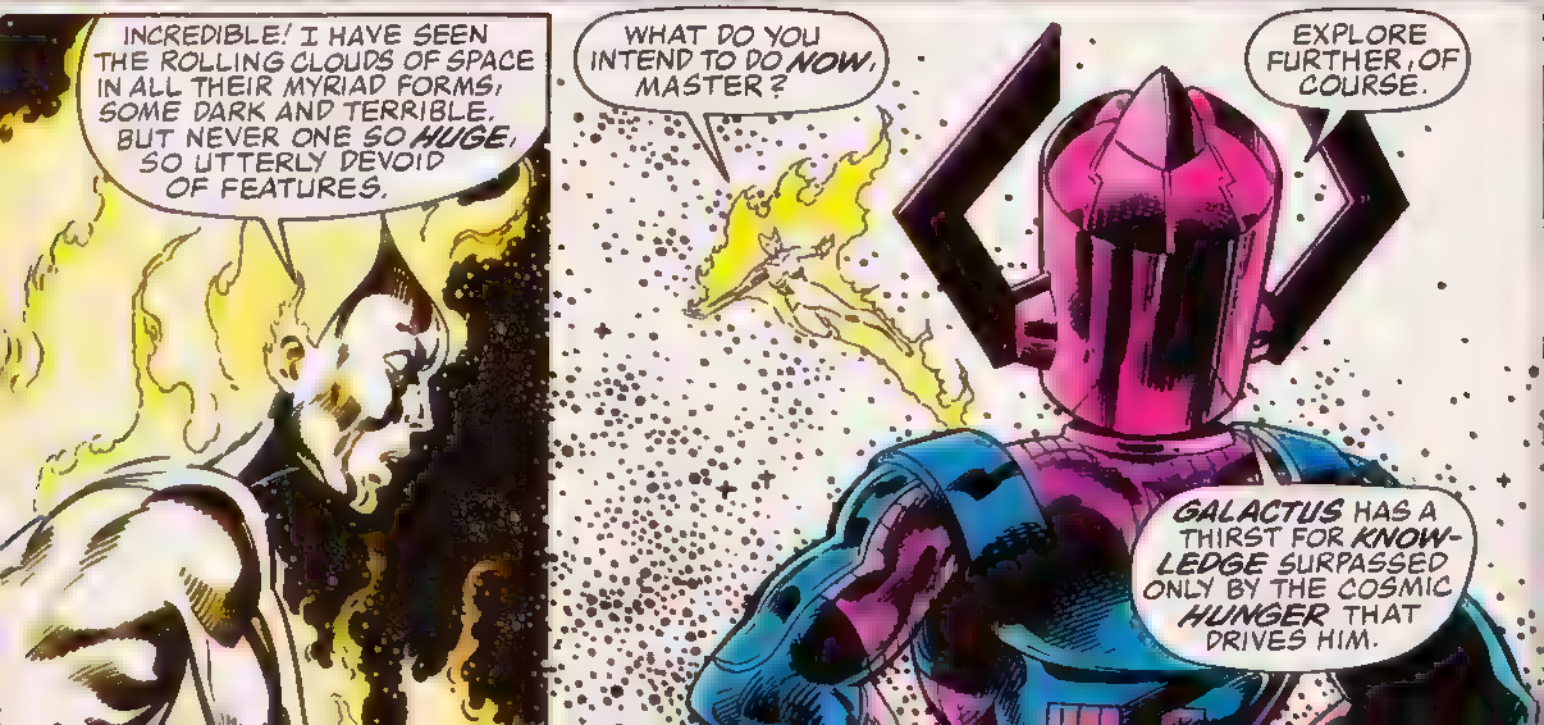
THE LAST GALACTUS STORY

CHAPTER SIX
THE HIDDEN STARS

IT SEEMS STRANGER TO MY EYES THAN TO YOURS, MASTER.
IN ONE HUNDRED MILLION YEARS THE RACE OF MY ANCESTORS OBVIOUSLY CHANGED A GREAT DEAL.
BY THE TIME THEY BUILT THIS PLACE THEY HAD VERY LITTLE IN COMMON WITH THE SHAPE AND SUBSTANCE OF THE PEOPLE I ONCE KNEW.
INDEED, GALACTUS HAS LONG BEEN BEYOND THE SHAPING HAND OF EVOLUTION, THUS I AM SOMETIMES ASTOUNDED BY THE CRAFTING OF LIFE NATURE CAN ACHIEVE.
COME NOW. LET US SEEK AN ENTRY TO ONE OF THE LESS DAMAGED BUILDINGS...
AND LEARN, IF WE MAY WHAT SECRETS LIE WITHIN...
REMEMBERING STILL ITS ANCIENT FUNCTION THE OLD WALL SHIFTS, ALTERING EVEN AT ITS MOLECULAR LEVEL...
...AND PERMITTING THE TWO VASTLY DIFFERENT LIFE-FORMS TO PASS AS EASILY THROUGH ITS SOLID SUBSTANCE AS A HAND MIGHT PASS THROUGH A SUMMER'S BREEZE.

IT'S FANTASTIC! CAN THIS REALLY HAVE BEEN A DWELLING PLACE?
THERE'S NOTHING EVEN REMOTELY LIKE THE KIND OF NORMAL HUMAN REFERENCE POINTS I'D EXPECT.
IT'S MORE LIKE.. LIKE THE INSIDES OF A LIVING THING.
THE AIR ITSELF SEEMS ALMOST ALIVE AND...
...SINGING...?
I SENSE IT TOO, MY HERALD. A LONG, SAD SONG. A HYMN TO THE DEPARTED SOULS THAT ONCE DWELT WITHIN THIS CITY.
IT TOUCHES EVEN GALACTUS. IT TOUCHES THE SECRET, HIDDEN PLACES OF MY HEART.
BUT HOLD! THERE IS NOW ANOTHER SIGNAL. MY SHIP NOW SPEAKS TO ME.
THE TIME FOR QUIET CONTEMPLATION IS PASSED. WE APPROACH OUR GOAL.


YES... THERE AHEAD OF US LIES THE GREAT MAELSTROM OF STARS THAT IS THE CORE OF THIS GALAXY. THE HUB, ABOUT WHICH THE STELLAR WHEEL TURNS.
BUT... WHY IS IT SO DARK? MASTER, SURELY, IT SHOULD BURN WITH ALL THE BRILLIANCE OF A BILLION SUNS?
IT SHOULD, MY LOYAL NOVA. BUT AS MY LONG RANGE SCANNERS HAVE ALREADY INFORMED ME, THERE IS A BLACK NEBULA COMPLETELY SURROUNDING THE CORE. A SHELL OF GAS AND DUST THAT SWALLOWS LIGHT.


INCREDIBLE! I HAVE SEEN THE ROLLING CLOUDS OF SPACE IN ALL THEIR MYRIAD FORMS, SOME DARK AND TERRIBLE, BUT NEVER ONE SO HUGE, SO UTTERLY DEVOID OF FEATURES.
WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO NOW, MASTER?
EXPLORE FURTHER, OF COURSE.
GALACTUS HAS A THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE SURPASSED ONLY BY THE COSMIC HUNGER THAT DRIVES HIM.

I DETECT UNUSUAL, ***UNNATURAL*** FIELDS OF ENERGY DEEP WITHIN THIS NEBULA.

THERE ARE DELICATE BALANCES HERE WHICH MY ***SHIP*** MIGHT DISRUPT BEFORE ***GALACTUS*** CAN PROPERLY STUDY THEM.

THUS MUST ***GALACTUS*** LEAVE THE HOLLOW WORLD OF THIS ANCIENT VESSEL AND STEP ONCE MORE INTO THE UNENDING SEA OF SPACE.

AROUND HIM IS HARD VACUUM, THE TEMPERATURE CLOSE TO ABSOLUTE ZERO.

*BUT **GALACTUS** DOES NOT CARE.*

THE EDGES OF THE NEBULA BEGIN TO COIL ABOUT ME.

THE BLACKNESS IS TOTAL. EVEN THE EYES OF ***GALACTUS*** ARE OF NO USE HERE.

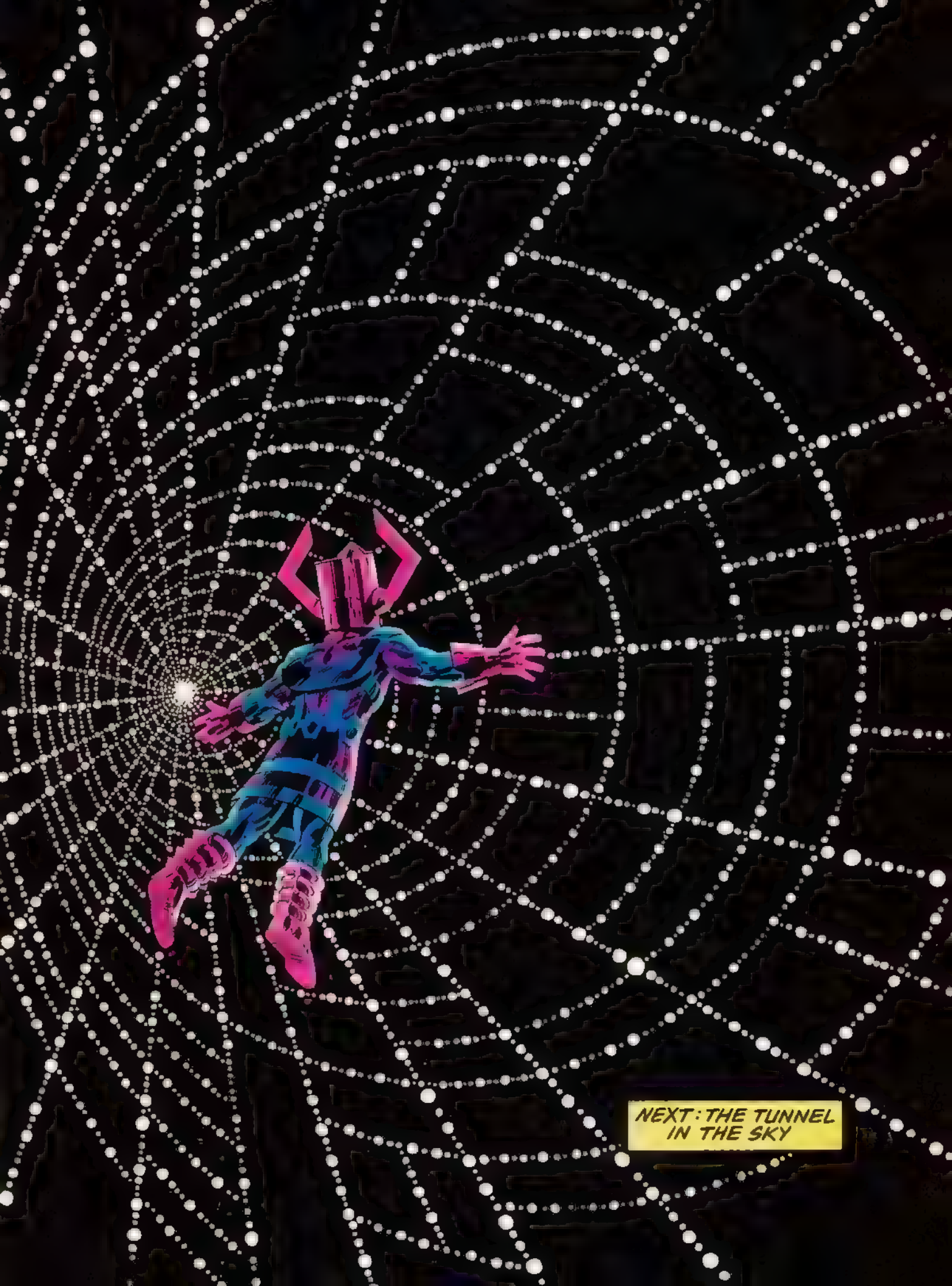
BUT ***GALACTUS*** HAS SENSES BEYOND AND BEYOND THOSE FEW OF MORTAL-KIND.

GALACTUS DOES NOT ***NEED*** EYES.

UNERRINGLY THE PROBING MIND OF THIS FIRST-BORN OF THE UNIVERSE REACHES OUT, SIFTING THROUGH THE WHIRLING MIASMA OF DUST AND GAS.

THIS WAY! THE ***SECRET*** LIES THIS WAY!

NOW. THE INNER PERIMETER OF THE NEBULA IS NEAR, JUST AHEAD. SOON ***GALACTUS*** SHALL BEHOLD THE ENIGMA THAT CROUCHES WITHIN THIS MIGHTY CLOUD.


NEXT: THE TUNNEL IN THE SKY

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art: Mike McMahon

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piece of color work which defies my ability to say what the story was really about in simple terms which I can relate onto mere paper with a clumsy typewriter which I am using.

Phil Hale has got a great sense of humor the likes of which populated a magazine which was called **Mad** when it was in its heyday when they had people working for them.

I can say almost the same thing for **Dr. Watchstop** pieces by **Ken Macklin** which have been running for a while. The stories are truly amusing and yet have a true science-fiction feeling to them. Something a lot of professional science-fiction writers cannot do no matter how hard they try. The colors are truly interesting in the soft quality in them. I enjoyed the almost fairytale quality of the story.

Ghosts in the Machine by **Rick Veitch** struck me as being something better than the average piece of art. It is nothing I felt was extraordinary. I hope in the future we see more of **Veitch.** His is one of the rising forces in the world of comics. I hope that it will be something extraordinary.

Zoran Vanjaka's work struck me as something interesting done in ballpoint pen. I hope that something else be done in exploring what can happen in the world of comics today.

Cobalt 60 is something I will have to go back and read from chapter one through final. I liked **Vaughn Bodé's** work when I first saw it years ago, but it was a part of the Sixties and something else onto itself. I thought it was rather underground at the time. I hope it is not going to be held against me, but I frankly like the story and am not on drugs while reading it.

A Matter of Vengeance by **Archie Goodwin** and **Rich Buckler** was a very good story done to fit a cover. I feel that the story showed that **Rich** can still draw as well as anyone else in the world can draw. I hope we get to see more work from **Mr. Buckler.**

The best story in the book was the last by **Artifact Studios.** It was magic. Pure magic with its feel of what is real in the world and what is better.

Finally can I say that if **The Comics Buyer Guide** poll included a place for anthology books I would rank **Epic** #1. The only book come close is the British **Warrior.** Please, go monthly.

Mark Ryan
St. Louis, MO

Monthly status doesn't appear to be in our immediate future, *Mark.* The demands of putting together a color magazine, in terms of time, personnel, and other vital resources (like money) are tremendous, and given the rest of our publishing schedule—the newsstand comics, the direct-sale only comics, the mini-series and graphic novels—we really don't see how we could manage it without a pretty sharp drop in quality and a pretty sharp increase in nervous breakdowns.

Dear Stan and Archie,

(Actually, I was going to greet you differently, but it seems everyone who writes you says "Dear Stan and Archie": why buck protocol?)

As I stood at the magazine display, my mind absorbed by the cavernous emptiness generated by row upon row of mediocre similarity, I was suddenly aware of something different. There, third row down and fourth from the left, was **Epic.** Not that I had never seen the magazine before: truthfully, I had read it on numerous occasions, gleaning much enjoyment from its content. But this time, something was different. Locked in mortal combat on its cover were two beings whose essence I had tried to capture in words on numerous occasions: I was awestruck. To explain, I must digress: I am a role player, and in fact do referee a mildly insane world of my own creation. One of my players is both an artist and a cat fancier, and could not visualize one of the races which populated my world ("a humanoid cat? No way. It would look like some guy with a mask on his head..."). I, working mainly in words, was unable to convey what I meant. And here it was: my Lorcats, at last! Gloriously, sensuously feline, yet bipedal and humanoid enough to be recognizable. I had to buy the magazine, if for nothing else: I could not have the painting to hang on my wall, but I could have issue #29 to grace my collection...

Upon opening the magazine, I was mildly surprised to find that there was a story attached to the cover. I initially avoided **A Matter of Vengeance,** assuming that nothing could possibly live up to the fantasies the cover had brought to life in my mind. But at last, I had no choice: the rest of the issue read, I settled down to see what mockery of my imaginings the story would create. I realized that there was no more. Five more times I absorbed the work, gleaning every detail the stunning artwork was able to provide, and revelling in what had to be the best story I had ever read in a magazine such as **Epic.** Here were real people, not strutting Conans: people who you could both laugh and cry with (Jihad Tuan's face when he realized that he was soon to be gelded was priceless). I was amazed at the interaction of the story and art: but then, that's what magazines such as yours are supposed to be about, is it not? At last you have, for me, truly succeeded...

I would like to extend my utmost thanks to **Steve Hickman,** whose glorious cover art finally convinced my friend that my Lorcats could be as stunning as I described them. As for the story, I would give my life (well, almost) to see **Archie** and **Rich** do some more on Jihad, Stormmane (may his hangovers always be mild, and may he never have one in my town) and Sheeva. If they do not, then I will be sorely disappointed: I sincerely doubt that such a combination of wildly wonderful characters, marvelous story lines, and beautiful artwork will ever grace your magazine again unless they do. In any case, I must also thank all of you at **Epic** for at least giving me this small glimpse into a world I can do little else but wish to be in...

Kelly Craig Adams
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Being cat lovers (not to mention admirers of feisty, attractively dressed ladies) ourselves, we'd be really pleased to see the further adventures of that unlikely trio ourselves, *Kelly.* We think the story was a lot of fun, too. Hope the gaming goes well for you.

If you have letters or comments you'd like to see in these pages, please address them to:

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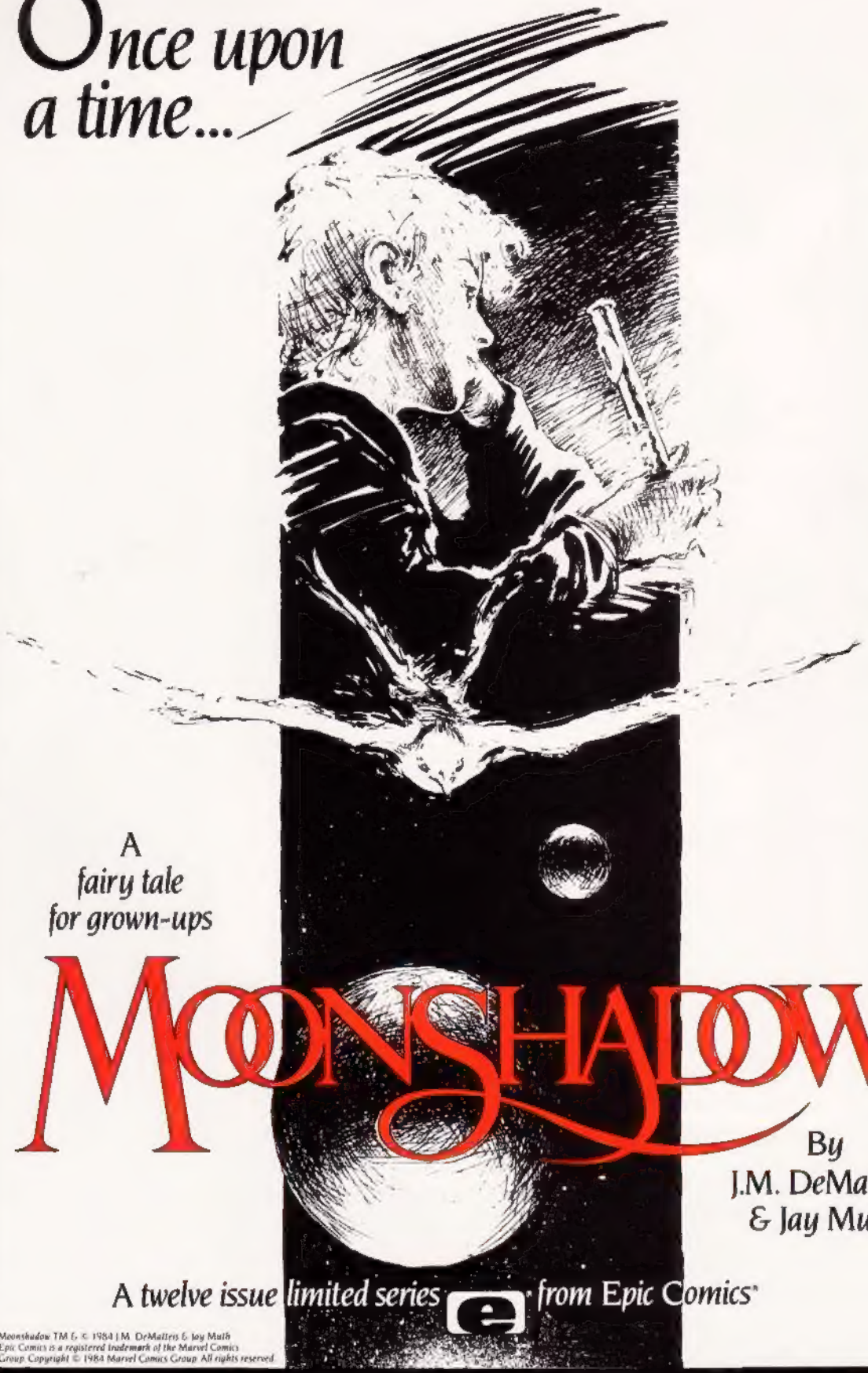

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